



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NEDL TRANSER



HN 1CQM F

2931

Boston Library Society,

No. ~~10 DOVLSTON PLACE~~
114, NEWBURY STREET,

ADDED TO THE LIBRARY

22nd day of *December* 187*3*

To be returned in *5 weeks* days.

A fine of ^{*one*} ~~Three~~ Cents will be incurred for each day this volume
is detained beyond that time.

CANCELLED

1940

1894

160 Ja 4 18

1900

535 JAN 20 1900

1907

447 JUN 15 JUN 20

626 1913
APR 9 APR 14

THE CURATE'S DISCIPLINE.

BY

MRS. EILOART.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1867.

The right of Translation is reserved. by Google

~~File~~

~~Vol. II~~

KD 2931



LONDON :

PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE,
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.

CHAPTER I.

THE night was wearing into morning before Philip Wendell closed his eyes. He sat long and steadily thinking by his bed-room window—not smoking, to help him in his thoughts, but with folded arms, leaning back in an easy-chair, his feet resting on another, and his eyes directed upwards, his reveries to all appearance very far away from this sublunary world, its sins and its troubles, though never had the Curate's mind been more fully occupied with things of the earth earthly—things, too, concerning himself, instead of the anxieties, cares, and strivings to better the sordid lives of those around him, that had so much engaged his attention since he came to Elmsley. He had been surprised into taking a step which he had little thought of doing twelve hours previously. It was true that for a long

time past he had felt his thoughts turning on Magdalene's dark eyes, when they ought to have been very differently engaged. He had met her in the cottages of bed-ridden old women, and Philip knew that when he had entered unperceived, and heard her reading (*not* Miss Darnell's tracts—Magdalene, in spite of Miss Becky, had refused to have anything to do with them), he had paused to listen, not to the blessed promises of Holy Writ, but to the sweet voice that told of them. He knew that in the very pulpit he was always conscious of Magdalene's presence—that even when engaged in his most sacred ministrations, he could not repress a blank^d disappointed feeling if she was absent from the church. He knew what a thorough heartiness of hate he had lavished on poor Artie, and he laughed to himself at the recollection of it. He knew how, in his walks, if he had caught sight of a dress that looked like Magdalene's, his pulses had quickened, and his heart throbbed, and with what a weary, dissatisfied feeling the day had often closed, which

had given him no glimpse of her. And all this time he had been trying to persuade himself that Magdalene Grant was to be to him no more than any other woman, and that to be the priest of God, and the minister to the poor, would be enough for his requirements. And now this had come upon him—how, he knew not—like very midsummer madness, and he was pledged heart and hand to this girl, whose face he had never seen, and whose name he had never heard some six months back. He felt a little angry with himself—he had not thought such weakness was in his nature. What, indeed, had he to do with love?—he who had meant his life to be given to his Church as entirely as if he had been a Roman celibate. He who had always thought he could find work enough to do without taking upon himself the duties of husband and father—duties which he might fitly leave to other men, whose weaker natures required the solace of domestic life, and to whom such labours as had been given him were not appointed. And now he had found

he was no more than another man, with a heart just as weak and as warm in his bosom as if he had never taken a priest's vows upon himself, and resolved that, let others think as they might of fat glebes, and woman's love, and household comfort, he would be a priest indeed. He shrugged his shoulders with something very like self-contempt; and then Magdalene's face came before him, not as he had seen it first, sad and heavy-eyed, but radiant with the flush of love and joy that his words had called forth, and he felt that, after all, no man had much right to despise himself for having fallen in love with Magdalene Grant.

"She will make a good wife," he thought—"good, brave, and self-denying. If we had lived in other times, she would have stood by me at the stake, or, like John Rogers' wife, have made the shirt for me to wear at my burning. She is a girl that will help a man in his duty—ay, and rather see him die than flinch from it. I thought I was strong by myself—I think I shall find myself

stronger with her by my side. After all, I don't know but my folly may have been the truest wisdom."

But there were other people besides Magdalene and himself to be thought of. His first duty would be to call on Mr. Thornleigh, and let him know how matters stood. He had not much reason to fear opposition in that quarter. Philip Wendell was quite aware that in a worldly point of view he was a better match than Magdalene's guardian could reasonably have expected for her. His uncle, a rich and childless man, the squire of many a fertile acre in one of the western counties, gave him an allowance of three hundred a year, with a promise to make provision for its being continued to him after the old gentleman's own death. Philip's elder brother was the squire's heir, but there was a good living in the family gift, which had always been held by one of the Wendells; and the present incumbent (now over sixty, and also Philip's uncle) could scarcely be expected to retain it much longer. It

had long ago been settled by the two old men that the living of Crome should, in the fulness of time, be given to Philip ; and though he had hitherto thought little of the additional eight hundred a year that was thus to come to him, valuing it only as the means that would enable him to give more to his poor, and to buy books for himself, still the recollection of the Rectory of Crome was not an unpleasant one now. But it was necessary that he should acquaint his uncle as well as Mr. Thornleigh with his intended marriage. Well, his uncle had told him to get married, and not to care about money.

“Get a good girl, and a pretty one, Phil, and never mind the rest.”

There was no question as to Magdalene's beauty, and Philip was quite convinced of her goodness ; and he certainly had not minded the rest. He had some misgivings that Magdalene's ancestry would scarcely bear inquiring into, and it was possible that the Squire might be a little tenacious on that point.

“Still, it'll be all right when he sees her,” thought Philip. “The old gentleman was always a beauty lover. I think he'd have forgiven my marrying a dustman's daughter with such a face as hers.”

And Magdalene had enough to think of, too—enough to think of, indeed, with this great new happiness that had befallen her, and to wonder how she could ever have repined and murmured when life had so much in store for her. She had been thankless and unbelieving, and God had been gracious to her—oh! how much more gracious than she merited; and then she was down upon her knees, praying with a flood of happy tears that she might be worthy of the man who had chosen her—that she might never give him cause to repent of or regret his choice.

“To think that he should care for me!—and I—oh! what have I to give back for the love of such a one? Nothing—nothing but to worship him night and day; pray for him—live for him! Oh! if he were only poor, that I might work my fin-

gers off for him! But they say he is rich! Ah! if he had only had his hundred a year, how I would have saved and managed and worked for him. But I shall not even have that to do. It seems as if he was to give me all and everything—but what a blessed thing it is I love him so dearly I shall feel glad and proud to let him do it. Though who knows I may do something yet—if I can only be the artist he spoke of, he may be proud of me too—oh! to think of it!—if ever I should make my name famous now, that name will be his!”

She was very humble in her great happiness; more so, I think, than—with such a face for her lover to prize, and with such a love to give back in return for his—she need have been. But Magdalene had had no mother to glory in the rich colours and rounded contours of her beauty—no mother to delight in dressing and adorning her darling, and so without words letting her see that she was something very precious to be so cared for. Her own artist sense had told her something,

and Mrs. Marchdale's caressing words had spoken yet more plainly of her loveliness ; but still she felt a great timid wonder mingling with her gratitude for the happiness that had come to her. She had not dreamed that this would come—the joy seemed too great to be believed in ; and in the morning, when she awoke, she was half afraid lest all that had passed on the preceding day should prove a dream, like those that all the night had filled her sleep with thoughts of Philip Wendell.

But it was not long before Philip made his appearance at the house, coming even before she had left it for Mrs. Marchdale's. She saw him from one of the upper windows, and then began fully to realise her position, and comprehend what he had come for. It had not occurred to her before that Mr. Thornleigh had anything to do with her lover and herself ; now she understood that it was to him, as her guardian, Philip had to speak ; and she sat down trembling, and wondering what his answer would be. Then she found it impossible to remain still, and bear the suspense ; and, hastily

dressing, ran downstairs and out of the house, and arrived at the Manor House, to make what progress she could with her painting, with all her colours mingling together, so that she was using blue for red, and green for yellow, and found herself producing an indescribable combination of horrors instead of the cherub's head she had been endeavouring to copy.

"Well," said Mrs. Marchdale, looking over her shoulder, "don't you think, my dear, you'd better follow Clarie's example—honestly say you're so tired and idle, and so thoroughly enjoyed yourself yesterday, that everything to-day seems flat, stale, and unprofitable. There, put away your brushes, Magdalene, and let's pull all the people to pieces we saw yesterday. There's nothing so refreshing as a thorough good gossip, with a spice of malice in it; and by to-morrow we shall have sobered down enough to work in earnest."

Clarice was not in the room when Mrs. Marchdale spoke, and Magdalene felt as if she could no longer keep her secret, her precious, beautiful

secret, to herself, but must tell it to this dear friend, as she would unto a mother. Of course, in strict propriety, she ought first to have communicated it to Miss Becky; but then Miss Becky hardly seemed the person to tell a love tale to.

"Good gracious! my dearest child, what *is* the matter?" cried Mrs. Marchdale, as she found Magdalene kissing her hand and crying over it. "Oh! dear, those fêtes! Girls need have the constitution of horses to stand them! There's Clarie with a bad headache, but then she had things to annoy her that you hadn't, and I don't think you danced half so much. I've been blaming myself for not looking after you enough; but then you disappeared almost as soon as you came. Where did Miss Becky hide you?"

"Oh! Mrs. Marchdale, it wasn't the dancing!" sobbed Magdalene. "Anything but that. I didn't dance at all."

"Oh! my poor darling, how shamefully I neglected you. But why didn't Miss Becky see after you, or Captain Osborne?—he really

shouldn't have thrown everything upon me," said Mrs. Marchdale, plaintively. "And what on earth were all the young men thinking of?"

"I didn't want to dance," cried Magdalene; "and—and I am so happy! I must tell you—for, you see, I have no mother."

"O-h!" cried Mrs. Marchdale. It was only "oh!" but Magdalene knew that her story was half told already, and that her friend quite understood *what* it was she was to hear. "Well, my dear, and who is it?"

Magdalene looked up, blushing and smiling through her tears; then she looked down, and Mrs. Marchdale stooped and heard Philip Wendell's name.

"And so it's he, is it, my dear? Well, I believe him to be very good, and to do a great deal of good—though I'm afraid, as my husband and I don't go to Church, he has a very different opinion of us. Never mind, dear, I've no doubt he'll make you an excellent husband, and very likely be a bishop some day. You've done very well—

very well indeed, Magdalene, and I wish you all joy and happiness." She kissed the girl very fondly, and then continued—"You're spoilt for an artist now, my dear—but never mind, you'll make a very good clergyman's wife, and there are quite as good things to be done in the world as painting pictures. Dear me! to think of my hearing two love stories in one day! You've no idea what a goose Artie Waybrooke made of himself yesterday. But we won't talk of that now. Clarie will tell you all about it bye-and-bye. I hope Mr. Wendell won't forbid her being one of your bridesmaids."

Philip Wendell, meanwhile, had brought matters to a very satisfactory conclusion with Mr. Thornleigh, who was by no means so taken by surprise as the Curate had expected he would be. He had been a keener observer than the other had imagined. But he was sufficiently pleased at affairs having been brought to a crisis, and expressed himself accordingly.

"You'll have a good girl for your wife, I

honestly^e believe, Mr. Wendell, and I hope you'll make her happy. She won't come empty-handed either. I can do something for her without hurting my brother's children. There's five thousand pounds in Consols I've put away for Magdalene for years past, knowing she had no one but me to look to—no one but me, Mr. Wendell. You take a girl that has never known kith nor kin, and all I can tell you is, I never knew her father called other than an honest man, and her mother died before she was a twelvemonth old. So I've seen to her the best I could—kept her at school, and then brought her here, and I hope you won't be in a hurry to take her away. It'll be hard to part with the lass, just as I've learned to like her."

There was a huskiness in John Thornleigh's voice. His heart-strings might be tough; but Magdalene had twined herself round them. He rose and led the way from his own little sanctum where they had been discussing matters, to the parlour where Miss Becky sat wondering what private affairs the Curate could have to talk with

her brother about. She was much more astonished than he had been at hearing Philip Wendell's errand, and considerably more elated than a regard for her own dignity and the family credit allowed her to manifest. For it was very soothing to Miss Becky's feelings to think that any one "under her charge," should have carried off the best match in Elmsley. Artie Waybrooke would have been all very well; but still he was only a Curate *in posse* with, in all probability, a long interval between him and his share of his mother's income. Philip Wendell was not only a Curate *in esse*; but he had, as every one knew, a very comfortable income of his own already. Quite enough to begin housekeeping upon, Miss Becky considered; and there was no doubt as to the thorough gentility and respectability of the connection.

After this there could be no question as to her claims to mingle in the best set in Elmsley. So Miss Becky was very gracious to Philip Wendell; she could not have been more so had she been his mother-in-law expectant; and when Magdalene

returned, which she did not do till dinner was half over—a breach of etiquette with which, perhaps, her meeting the Curate on her way home had something to do—instead of being reproved, and called to order till her cheeks tingled again, as she had expected, Susan was desired to bring a hot plate for Miss Grant; and Miss Becky, with a meaning look, said,

“Don’t let it happen again, my dear; but young folks will be young folks all the world over.”

And something in the look and the smile made Magdalene realize for the first time the possibility of Miss Becky’s having once been young herself.

After dinner John Thornleigh called her to him.

“Well, my lass, so you’ve soon tired of the old nest—eh? But you must stay with us a little longer. It’s full soon for you to fly away yet.”

Then Miss Becky had her say as soon as she found herself alone with Magdalene.

“My dear, I’m very well satisfied with this

affair—very well indeed. I've not a word to say against it—and Mr. Wendell has behaved like a gentleman in coming here at once to tell us all about it. I've not had time yet to learn what my brother intends doing for you, and, as he says, it's too soon for you to leave us yet. We mustn't be in a hurry. But as you'll have a great deal to do, and it's my opinion that every young woman who marries respectably is bound to provide the household linen, I think we may as well set about it at once, so I shall ask Mr. Thornleigh for a cheque, and to-morrow you and I will go over to Berkstead, and buy the linen for the pillow-cases. They take a long time to make, especially with frills, so you and Susan shall begin them the day after."

CHAPTER II.

O H! those blessed autumn days, when Magdalene roamed with her lover through the green lanes of pleasant Hertfordshire. When the fading leaves wore a beauty and a richness that summer had never given them, and the whole earth had a calm mellow loveliness that was balm to the eye after the glare and heat of the sultry days that had gone by. She was very happy, but tremulously, fearfully happy, as if this joy were too great to be real, too precious to endure—something of fear and apprehension mingling at times with it, as though for her such happiness could never be for long.

But there was nothing apparently to dread. Philip had written to his uncle, the Squire, and to his other uncle, the Rector, and they had expressed

themselves very well satisfied. Five thousand pounds, after all, was a nice little help to a young clergyman. It was not necessary to inquire too minutely as to which branch of the Grants Magdalene belonged to. There was no doubt she came of a sufficiently respectable stock. Philip would never have looked at less than a lady; and however her guardian had made his money, he certainly knew how to dispose of it liberally; so the two old gentlemen had settled matters over their port, and in much such terms had expressed their opinion to their young relative. And the Curate was beginning to find there was something very pleasant in loving and being loved by such a girl as Magdalene. What a change had come over her! What pleasant little petulances, saucy, wilful ways, and small tyrannies she had now! Philip had been but too apt to live his life in a very sober and serious fashion, as if there was nothing worth thinking of but hard, strenuous work. He had no time, or fancied that he had none, to gather flowers by the way-side; and here was

Magdalene flinging them before him. It would have been too hard and churlish if he had disdained them now.

There was no doubt that she would make a good priest's wife—teach in the Sunday-schools, visit the sick, deal out her kindly little charities; but, in the meantime, she was a girl in the hey-day of her happy youth—loving and loved, with a sweet musical voice—never so musical as in laughter—fond of flowers, and innocent gaieties, and pretty dresses, worshipping, idolizing her lover; but, at the same time, very ready to make him feel that the thralldom was not all on her side, so that it is not to be wondered at that Philip Wendell became, if not a better man, decidedly a pleasanter one; and Mrs. Marchdale was quite justified in saying, "How much those two young people have improved by falling in love with each other."

Things went very pleasantly with Magdalene just now. She was quite the pet of the village. Mr. Wendell was not like an ordinary curate, and

the lady whom he made his wife would be able to take a very good position—quite as good a one as the wife of many a rector. Mrs. Darnell might have been a little patronizing, had it not been for Mr. Thornleigh's promised five thousand pounds. But a young lady was not to be patronized who brought such a fortune as that. Mrs. Waybrooke was very kind and cordial in her congratulations. She was not the woman to be angry with Magdalene for not having prevented her son falling in love with Clarice Marchdale, though she would have been very well pleased had the five thousand pounds fallen to his share. She petted Magdalene as much as ever, and said that Mr. Wendell had shown the same sense in managing his own affairs as he did in those of other people, and had made a choice that did him credit; and she said it, too, as nicely and pleasantly as if Magdalene had not now made it apparently impossible for her to carry out her pet scheme concerning Artie.

Mr. Thornleigh gave Miss Becky the cheque she asked for, and the pillow-cases were put in

hand at once. The wedding was not to take place till Magdalene had attained her nineteenth birthday—an event which was five months distant; but, as Miss Becky said, there was nothing like beginning in time, and five months was little enough to do all they had to do in. Magdalene sewed away at the pillow-cases—plain work is not altogether disagreeable, when it is for one's wedding outfit; and there were so many bright and hopeful thoughts to lighten what might otherwise have been the tedium of the long white seams and elaborate frilling. Susan worked away at them with steam pace, and a neatness Magdalene had scarcely expected from her, and took an early opportunity of paying her congratulations.

“I was so glad, Miss, to hear it!—Mr. Wendell's the nicest gentleman in Elmsley; and, oh! if you please, Miss, I did think of leaving, for Miss Thornleigh is so very hard to please; but would you mind taking me into your service, if I stay on here till the wedding?”

Magdalene said she should not mind at all; but

when she acquainted Miss Thornleigh with the arrangement, she was met with the encouraging remark—

“Then I wish Mr. Wendell joy of your house-keeping. There’ll be a nice pair of you—mistress and maid—one knows no more than the other how work should be done; and he’ll have a well-managed house to come home to. If I’d had my way with you, Magda, you’d have been good for something by this time; but it was quite against my wishes your frittering your time away at Mrs. Marchdale’s; and, I must say, I think it’s time now you turned your attention to something more useful than you’ll ever learn there.”

Miss Becky’s advice was not very graciously given, but Magdalene began to think there was some consideration due to it. Mrs. Marchdale quite agreed with her.

“Miss Thornleigh’s not the most agreeable person in the world, my dear; but I believe she’s a capital housekeeper; and I think, if you only come here every other morning, and spend the

alternate ones in the kitchen and store-room with her, it will be all the better for Mr. Wendell's comfort bye-and-bye."

So Magdalene gratified Miss Thornleigh by becoming as apt and attentive a pupil in housewifery as could well be desired ; so much so, that her instructress vouchsafed to say—

"You'll do me some credit yet, Magdalene, which is a great deal more than any one could have expected, considering what a poor, shiftless creature you were when I first took the charge of you."

But the painting was not to be given up either, so on one fine bright morning, towards the end of September, Mrs. Marchdale took Clarie and Magdalene, as previously arranged, to the Alms-houses. For a long time past Magdalene had been wishing to sketch them, and Mrs. Marchdale, though she said her *protégée* was spoilt for an artist, had no wish that she should devote her whole energies to the making of pillow-cases, and was very ready to continue assisting her in the more intellectual pursuit.

"You'll have many a quiet hour in the Rectory at Crome, my dear, when you'll find it a good thing to have something besides your needle to fill up your time with."

And though Mrs. Marchdale did not say so, she knew well enough that Magdalene, like herself, was one of those women who, however well they may direct a household, can never find enough to fill their souls in such directing. One half of their being—possibly the most feminine and loveable half—may find sufficient scope for its energies in the little toils, cares, and anxieties of a housewife's daily routine. But the other half—the artistic element within them—imperatively craves for something more, and failing to meet with it, many a woman becomes restless, querulous, and dissatisfied, for want of suitable employment for this part of her nature, not fulfilling her duties as wife, mother, or mistress one half so well as she would have done, had she not confined herself exclusively to them.

It had been arranged that they should go

directly after breakfast to the Almshouses, in order that Magdalene might have time for a good morning's work there, before Mr. Thornleigh came to take her on to Berkstead with him, to which town he was going upon business; and as more muslin was required for the frills of the pillow-cases, Miss Thornleigh thought that, it being only a case of matching materials, Magdalene might be trusted to market for herself, and it had been arranged that Mr. Thornleigh should take her on accordingly.

Magdalene arranged her sketching materials, and commenced operations. Mrs. Marchdale gave her a few preliminary instructions, and then, leaving Clarice with her, walked down the road to spend an hour in discussing some of the Chapel affairs with Mr. Thynne, whose modest residence was within a ten minutes' walk of the Almshouses.

She stayed longer with him than she had intended, for there were many things to be talked over—new books for the Sunday-school children, the expediency of having gas laid on in the

chapel—the merits and demerits of different pensioners. At last she returned to Magdalene, who had nearly completed her sketch.

“Ah! it looks very well, my dear,” she said, surveying it critically—“prettier on paper even than in reality. I like these Almshouses. When you’re a bishop’s lady, Magda, you ought to build and endow some in memory of Elmsley and its associations. Mr. Wendell will make a capital bishop; but, oh! dear, I shouldn’t like to be one of his clergy. He’ll expect them to be as near perfection as he is himself.”

“It must be a good thing to be rich, after all,” said Magdalene. “I like the idea of that old Alderman Osborne spending his money to such a purpose as this. He has a much better monument here than that hideous heap of stone in the churchyard that everybody in Elmsley thinks it incumbent on them to admire. If these were Catholic times, I suppose every inmate of these houses would feel bound to pray for his soul. Why shouldn’t they as it is?—why shouldn’t they

pray for the peace and rest in the other world of him who has given them both in this?"

"Has he?—well, I never knew it. There's little peace where a parcel of old women are for ever clacking together—slandering and backbiting their neighbours; and as to rest, I don't think this world's the place for it—not till we're laid under the earth, at any rate, young lady."

The speaker was Martha Warne, who, unperceived by either Mrs. Marchdale or the girls, had approached close to them. Magdalene had been rapidly completing her sketch, and the others looking over to watch her progress; and the backs of all were turned to Martha while she spoke. Magdalene looked round a little curiously, and saw Martha, while almost unseen herself, as Mrs. Marchdale and Clarice intervened.

"I should like to sketch that woman," she thought; "but what an inmate for my peaceful almshouses!"

Martha continued, addressing herself to Mrs. Marchdale—

"I suppose you're afraid to trust your young gentleman with me, ma'am—I haven't seen him for a month—I'm not prettily enough behaved for him, may be? • Ah! you needn't grudge me the sight of the one thing in this world I care to look upon!"

"He shall come and see you to-morrow, Martha," replied Mrs. Marchdale. "Being holiday time, he has been away from home on a visit; but I will not forget to send him to you—and God grant my boy may do you a little good, poor wretch!" she mentally added.

Magdalene had by this time completed her sketch, and, rising from her seat, was about to fold up her portable easel, when Martha Warne caught a full view of her. She looked curiously, questioningly at the girl; who, startled by the strange earnestness Martha displayed, glanced back a little angrily. There was a decided resemblance between the two faces, most of all in the eyes, that struck Mrs. Marchdale forcibly. Martha Warne must have been a very beautiful wo-

man in her time, and even in the wreck of her beauty you could trace features of the same cast and stamp as Magdalene's. Mrs. Marchdale wondered whether she saw the likeness herself—whether in Magdalene's bright girlish face she recognised a picture that the glass might have given her back twenty years ago? Perhaps she did, for she sighed long and heavily, and was about to turn away, when the noise of wheels was heard, and Mr. Thornleigh's phaeton stopping at the Almshouse gate, he alighted, and came towards the group upon the lawn.

Martha Warne saw him; her face lighted up with a look of recognition, in which something of dread mingled with a malicious defiance. It seemed as though, afraid of him, she yet felt he might have as good cause to shrink from her. She glanced at the phaeton—not an equipage exactly adapted for Hyde Park, but still with the well-fed horse, and the decent serving-man, evidently the property of a well-to-do owner. She made no attempt to move, but drawing her black

shawl round her, stood quietly on the grass not courting Mr. Thornleigh's gaze, but making no effort to withdraw from it. He was soon near them.

"Good-day, Mrs. Marchdale. Glorious autumn weather! Magda, my lass, ready to go to Berkstead? Put up your traps and jump in. We've no time to lose if we want to be back to dinner."

He spoke in a cheery, hearty tone—a tone that had not been unfamiliar with him lately; and shaking hands with Mrs. Marchdale and Clarice, caught sight of Martha Warne.

To this day Catharine Marchdale has never forgotten the look that came across his face—the utter horror, the blank dread despair that met her eye. If one had risen from the dead to taunt and mock and madden him with memories of past sins, in which the now dead corpse, and the still living man had shared in former times together, he could have worn no ghastlier face. And there was an agony of shame in it, too, as if that woman had

some terrible secret of his in her keeping, which it would crush him to have told. But there was no cowardice in the man even now, though the shock and the dread that had come across him had made his face white and set as if carved in marble, and the sweat stood like death-drops on his forehead. For Martha Warne picked up a pencil that Magdalene had dropped, and came to hand it to her. Both Clarice and she had been so busy rolling up the drawing materials, that they had not looked at Mr. Thornleigh; but when the woman came towards them with this pencil, and seemed as if she was about to lay her hand on Magdalene's arm, he stepped forward, and pushed her rudely back with a glance before which she cowered.

She wanted no words to tell her that John Thornleigh knew it was not for such as she to contaminate the young and innocent even by a touch. She cowered—but only for a second; then looked back with a wicked, bold defiance in her eyes; and, with set lips full of an evil meaning in them, passed on and went to her own door.

John Thornleigh looked after her ; and drawing a long breath, said—

“Does that woman live here, Mrs. Marchdale?”

“Yes, she is one of the alms-women ; Captain Osborne placed her here last winter.”

He said nothing more, but drawing Magdalene's hand under his arm, led her to the phaeton. He took up the reins mechanically, and turned his horse's head round.

“I thought we were going to Berkstead, sir,” said Magdalene, thinking he had forgotten their intended journey for the moment.

“Not to-day, my lass, not to-day,” he said wearily. “My head's not altogether right. I'll go home and lie down for a spell.”

He said nothing further till they turned in at the gate of the tile-yard, and then Magdalene saw his eyes fixed on her with a wistful, pitying tenderness.

“God help you, Magdalene, my lass,” he murmured, as he almost lifted her out of the phaeton,

and then, without another word, strode up to his own room, where he remained till dinner-time, when he came and took his place at table, to all appearance as quiet and unmoved as ever—the only trace of his late headache being a very slight additional pallor. He was all right, he told Magdalene, in answer to her inquiries—it was nothing but the heat of the day—he never knew such weather for September. But when the meal was over, instead of throwing his silk handkerchief over his face, as was his custom, and settling off to his ten minutes' nap, he desired Magdalene to come and read to him. She took up the paper and began.

“Nearer, child, nearer, I can't hear you at that distance.”

She came and sat down by his side, and presently found the hand nearest to him clutched as if in a vice. His eyes were closed, and he seemed falling off to sleep. She read on, and having only one hand to hold the paper by, placed it on a small table, and after a while ceased reading, for there was no question but that Mr. Thornleigh was in

a deep sound sleep. Miss Becky had left the room, having some tracts to distribute, and there was nothing to break the silence; and thus, for half an hour, Magdalene remained by her guardian's side, her hand tightly held in his while he slept on; then he awoke with a start and a gasp as if for breath, and looked round.

“Don't touch her or I'll strike you to the ground! Magda, my lass, I've been dreaming! Ugh!—dreams are dreadful things at times.”

CHAPTER III.

MRS. HILL was standing at her shop door that evening, amusing herself by looking up and down the road. It was an extremely mild excitement, the thoroughfare being always a very quiet one; but the air was so soft and warm, and the sun, which was sinking down behind the opposite fields, was crimsoning and gilding the clouds so refulgently, that it was not to be wondered at if she found it pleasanter to be there than inside her house, with its atmosphere always redolent of red herrings and beer. Jane and Sarah Ann were with her, dressed in their afternoon finery, and rejoicing, the one in scarlet, the other in blue, ribbons streaming from their hair. They were full of talk upon the topic, which for the last three weeks had been the staple subject of con-

versation in Elmsley—the Curate's engagement to Magdalene Grant.

“I never thought he was one of the marrying sort,” said Jane; “but lor! there's no telling, and somehow parsons never keep single long.”

“And that's a mercy,” said the mother, “what I should call a providential dispensation—for when they've got their own houses to see after, they ain't so fond of poking their noses into other people's at all times and seasons. It's to be hoped Mr. Wendell 'll follow the Rector's example now—stop at home with his wife, and take his glass of wine like a Christian, instead of interferin' with hard-working folks, and making out a man's worse than a heathen for just taking a drop o' beer after his long day's work's done?”

“Who's that coming down the road?” asked Jane. “It's never that woman Master Marchdale brought here last winter?”

“It is, though,” said her sister; “and she seems coming up to our place.”

“If she'd had any decency in her,” observed

Mrs. Hill, "she'd have been here long afore this to let us know how she was getting on. But I suppose when she found herself taken up by all the fine folks, she was too grand to come near us."

However that might be, Martha Warne did not appear to be too grand now, for she addressed Mrs. Hill and her daughters, civilly saying "good evening," and intimated that she had called to thank them for their attention to her in her illness.

"Though I suppose you think I've been a long time thinking about it; but I'm not given to gadding about, and somehow the time goes before one's aware, but this evening was so lovely, I thought I'd just put on my bonnet and come round."

Mrs. Martha Warne looked—for her—very respectable. Her shawl was tidily put on, her bonnet was in something like its proper shape, and she had a clean cap under it. Her gown, too, was in decent order—altogether she looked a very different person from the bundle of rags John Hill had brought home to his fireside that winter night.

Mrs. Hill made some suitable answer to this civil speech, and asked Martha if she would step in and rest awhile. The invitation was graciously accepted, and Martha was ushered into the little sanctum behind the shop.

"Dear me!" she cried, looking round, "how it all reminds me of the time I was brought in here. Well, I've had no cause to regret it. I found good friends where I least expected them, and I'm sure I can't speak too well of Captain Osborne, nor Mrs. Marchdale either, for the matter of that!"

"Ah! you've just managed to hit it nicely," said Mrs. Hill. "Got in with both sides. It was an uncommon lucky thing for you, falling in with those young Marchdales."

"They're a nice family," said Martha—"what I've seen of them. Two young ladies, ain't there?"

"Lor, no!" cried Jane Hill, who had followed her mother and their guest into the parlour, "only one. She's considered pretty—rather. I don't know, myself, though—fine feathers make fine birds, they say."

"I've noticed two young ladies with Mrs. Marchdale," said Martha; "and they both seemed like own daughters to her."

"Ah! you're thinking of Miss Grant," rejoined Mrs. Hill, "a girl with dark eyes and hair, and a face that, to my thinking, is worth two of Miss Marchdale's. I'm none so fond of your pink and whites myself. But, lor! *she's* no relation to Mrs. Marchdale—only came down to this part about the same time you did. Now I come to think of it, it was the very night you were brought here, that I heard there was a young lady come down with Mr. Thornleigh, on a visit to Miss Becky, and there she's been a-staying ever since."

"Mr. Thornleigh!" observed Martha, thoughtfully. "It's not a common name. I knew some one once with a name very like it, but it isn't likely it would be the same; but, there, one meets with all sorts of people, and names too, jogging about the world."

"Why, you haven't been in Elmsley these eight months, and never heard of Mr. Thorn-

leigh?" cried Mrs. Hill. "But, there, perhaps you're like me, keep yourself to yourself, and mind your own business; and it's the best way too, if every one would only do it. But Mr. Thornleigh, though he's a plain, homely sort of man, is reckoned about as rich as any one in these parts, and folks say he's going to give Miss Grant quite a fortune when she marries. She's an orphan, I've heard, and he's adopted her."

"Adopted her!" said Martha. "Hasn't he any children of his own, then?"

"Well, it's supposed not," said Mrs. Hill, with a laugh, "seeing he's a bachelor—and Miss Becky Thornleigh, his sister, lives with him. Folks said it was a dull sort of a house for a young lady like Miss Grant to be brought to; but she's likely to leave it soon, and marry Mr. Wendell—the Curate, you know."

"Yes, I've seen him," replied Martha.

"Rather too much of him at times, perhaps," said Mrs. Hill.

"So he's to marry Miss Grant," observed Martha

Warne. "I suppose Mr. Thornleigh don't live far from Mrs. Marchdale's, as she and the young lady seem to know each other so well?"

"Lor! to think of your not knowing Mr. Thornleigh's! It's the tile-yard, you know."

And Mrs. Hill proceeded to describe John Thornleigh's residence; and Martha Warne, who was evidently on her best behaviour, agreed with her that it must be a dull place for a young lady to live in, and that it was no wonder Miss Grant was willing to leave it. After partaking of a little refreshment, in the shape of a glass of mild ale and a biscuit, for which Mrs. Hill hospitably declined payment, she took her departure, and proceeded down the lane, apparently as if intending to return homewards. After awhile, however, she struck across the fields, and found her way into a bye-path, which led her into the road where John Thornleigh's house and tile works were situated. It was now past eight o'clock, but the moon was shining full and clear, and Mrs. Warne was

enabled to inspect the house and premises almost as plainly as if it had been broad daylight. She opened the large white gate, and walked up the gravel path, surveying, as she did so, all around with a scrutinizing eye.

“He’s managed to get a snug nest for himself, and feathered it well, too, by all accounts. Things look pretty comfortable. I wonder, now, what they’d say if I was to walk up to the front door and give a rat-tat, and send in my name. Lord! how they’d stare! *Miss Grant*, too—*Miss Grant*—and she’s going to be married—and be a parson’s wife, of all things!—I fancy I could make the parson open his eyes if I were to tell him one or two little matters.”

She peered about her, and began to consider how she could best obtain admittance.

“It won’t do to make him desperate,” she muttered; “I’d as soon face a tiger as John Thornleigh, when his blood’s thoroughly up—but see him I *will*!—haven’t I a right to?—who better?”

Still she seemed afraid of openly demanding admittance, and was hesitating what to do, when the white gate opened again, and two figures advanced up the pathway. Martha Warne crept behind the elm-tree, and they passed without seeing her, though they were near enough for her to hear their very words. It was Magdalene and the Curate, who were now returning from an evening stroll. They were talking the idle nonsense lovers are so fond of; and he was looking down on her, as men will look upon the face that in all the world is dearest to them. Martha saw them plainly.

"Loves her?—yes; it's not John Thornleigh's money that has bought her a husband," she muttered; "and what sort of a wife will she make him, I wonder? Wouldn't he be afraid to venture, fond as he is, if he knew all? She comes of a nice respectable stock for the parson to marry!"

They went into the house, and the door closed behind them; but presently re-opened, and Magdalene came running out. She had missed her

handkerchief, and, without saying anything, went back, intending to go as far as the gate to look for it. Something impelled Martha to speak to her. She advanced towards her.

“Good evening, miss—it’s a nice quiet night for courting.”

Magdalene drew back, and glanced haughtily at the woman.

“I think you are the person I saw at the almshouses this morning,” she said to Martha, who stood steadily surveying her. “Perhaps you are not aware that you are trespassing upon private property. Mr. Thornleigh does not allow people to go in and out of his grounds, except upon business.”

“Trespassing !” muttered Martha. “Is that the best word you have got to give me, young lady ? Come, now, let me tell your fortune—I think I could do it without the cards—shall I ?”

“If you don’t leave this place at once,” replied Magdalene, angrily, “I shall call Mr. Thornleigh’s man. How dare you talk to me like this !”

She turned to go, but Martha put out her hand to stay her.

“Won’t you listen to me for a moment?” she cried passionately, and caught her dress.

Magdalene tore it from her, and, without further search for the handkerchief, hurried back to the house. She looked so pale and scared when she entered the parlour, that Mr. Thornleigh asked what was amiss.

“Only a woman in the grounds, who has been speaking strangely to me,” replied Magdalene. “I think it is the one I saw at the Almshouses this morning. Oh! don’t go near her, Mr. Thornleigh. Let me tell Job—or she will go away of herself. I daresay she only came in here for a stroll, and it was very foolish of me to be so easily frightened.”

But Mr. Thornleigh had left the room before Magdalene had finished speaking, and hastily putting on his hat, began to search in the tile-ground for the intruder. It was some time before he found her. Instead of going up to the house,

as she had at first thought of doing, she had seated herself on the grass, and was swinging herself backwards and forwards, muttering to herself—

“The way of the world!—the way of the world! Bear them, and nurse them in sorrow and pain, and then be spurned like the dirt! If my proud young lady only knew all, it might teach her to keep a civil tongue in her head.”

She was so absorbed in her thoughts, that she heard nothing of Mr. Thornleigh till he was closely looking down upon her, and saying briefly—

“Well?”

She glanced towards him.

“So you’ve come out to me—that was civil, at any rate. I suppose you’re going to ask me in?”

She said it with a half laugh, scanning him, meanwhile, with an expression half fear, and half bravado in her eyes, and he, still looking down upon her, replied quietly—

“It took me many years’ hard work to save the

money that bought yon house, but I'd rather fire it with my own hand than you should enter it. Now tell me what it is you want, and what you have to say after the cheat and lie you played upon me."

"It wasn't intended for a cheat," rejoined Martha, sullenly. "I'm not so bad as you'd make me out to be; only I didn't die to please the doctors, and make their words come true—that's all. Would you have had me kill myself out of politeness to them?"

"Well, you're alive," replied John Thornleigh, in the same hard, pitiless tone; "and now what do you want with me?"

The woman looked eagerly up at him. That tone was very hard to hear. There was some feeling left within her still. Was there none in him for her to appeal to? It seemed not, for she put out her hand to touch his, and said, in a low whisper, "John." He drew back fiercely, and wiped the fingers she had touched upon his coat.

"I don't want to strike you," he said, "as

you've the shape of a woman, but if you do that again, I will."

"Why don't you, then?" she cried, fiercely—"why don't you, then? Kill me, if you like. I haven't so much to live for; but I'll take good care before you close my mouth, that everyone hereabouts shall know what you wouldn't like told, if only for the sake of the fine lass in the house yonder."

John Thornleigh paced up and down.

"God help the child!" he said, half aloud; then he addressed Martha Warne again: "I suppose you didn't come here without some object in view? Now, what is it?—money, most likely. Let me know your price, and if it's not too outrageous, I must pay it. But don't try me too far, or I may take other measures."

"I know what you mean," replied Martha, derisively; "but I *don't* know of any measures short of cutting my tongue out that would make me keep silence; and I suppose, though I have gone to the wrong side of the law in one or two

matters, it wouldn't allow you to do that. It's hard—isn't it?—that rich men like you can't have things all their own way?"

John Thornleigh still paced up and down, appearing not even to hear what she had said. Presently he spoke again—

"Now, what is your price? I want silence, and I'll buy it. It's a fair bargain between you and me, though I don't know that I'm doing right to others in making it."

"Then don't make it," said Martha—"nobody asks you. Go, and let every one know all about the parson's wife that is to be—*will* she be his wife then, I wonder? There's no knowing—men are such fools, ain't they, when a pretty face is in the way? And there's a pretty face there—don't you think so? Something, to my fancy, like one you went nearly mad for once—little as one might think it now," she added, bitterly.

"Yes, I've been a fool in my time," said John Thornleigh.

"And you'd be a worse fool now if you'd let the thoughts of what has been and can't be undone spoil matters now, wouldn't you?" asked Martha. "You were always a hard man, John Thornleigh, but you wouldn't be hard enough to break a girl's heart and spoil her marriage—it would be easy to do if you were cruel enough to wish it."

"How much do you want?" said Mr. Thornleigh, taking some loose silver and gold out of his waistcoat-pocket.

"Well, I don't look quite the thing to come to the wedding, do I?" said Martha, glancing at her worn attire. "I should like a new fit out. You're a rich man, and twenty pounds wouldn't hurt you—and I might try and get it in another way, you know."

She came close, and whispered something to him.

"You'd better not attempt it," he said. "I should find it easy enough to settle *that* part of the business—I wouldn't give you a shilling to save

you from starving," he added fiercely, "if it were not for that poor child; and I doubt if I'm doing my duty there!"

He took out his pocket-book.

"Not notes!" cried Martha; "I shouldn't find it easy to change them. Besides, people might be suspicious, you know, though I am such a respectable person! You must give it me in gold."

"Wait here, then, till I bring it," said Mr. Thornleigh; and went back to the house, which he entered by the side door. It was not long before he returned. "Now, for how long is this to buy your silence?"

Mrs. Warne laughed.

"Till it's spent, I suppose—and twenty pounds won't last for ever. Well, good night; what shall I say?—Mr. Thornleigh? or is it to be, John for the sake of old times?—'John Anderson my Jo What a pretty song that is, isn't it?"

"Take your money and be silent," said Mr. Thornleigh; "and, mind, I am not going to have you fix yourself upon me like a leech—take care

what you are about, or I shall find ways and means to throw you off completely. And above all, don't come near that girl. She's not for such as you to touch, or even look at."

The intense contempt revealed in every tone of his cold, passionless voice was too much for the woman's endurance.

"I'll fling your money back at you!" she cried, "if you speak to me again like that. I'll claim the girl, and shame her too, if you don't mind. If I have gone wrong, do you think I'm a stock or a stone to be spoken to like this? And there was a time—oh, my God!—there was a time when you would have moved the whole world to have got me to smile at you—ay, I remember it; and what's the meaning of all your grand ways now, but that you can't forget I loved another better a thousand times than you!"

She drew herself up as she spoke, and something of the light and the beauty that in former days had turned John Thornleigh's head came back to her.

"And I did love him, too!" she continued—"and I loved him, though he beat and ill-used me—I love him still, though he is dead; and yet—and yet—oh! I can't forget—I can't forget!"

A change came over her passion, for she flung herself almost at John Thornleigh's feet, crying and moaning bitterly.

"John—John, I'm not all bad! Oh! speak to me kindly for old times' sake! John, I didn't mean one half I said—I've been bad and wronged you, I know it—and if I haven't suffered for it, never woman did! I believed I was dying when I sent you the child—before God I did!—and it would have been better far if I *had* died. But do take back the money now, and give me one kind word—oh! John—John, if you ever loved me, one kind word!"

She was writhing in her agony at his feet, but John Thornleigh was hard and pitiless, and this woman had wronged him very greatly. She fell forward, and clasped his knees, and he almost spurned her from him.

"I told you once," he said, "such a time might come, and it has come. I have nothing more to do with you but to give you the money you asked for, to keep you from saying what might injure the innocent. I thought I had forgiven you, dead—I find I can't forgive you living; and if you don't want to try my patience too much, you had better neither touch me, nor call me by my name."

He turned away from her, cold and immovable as granite. She looked after him with a great blank despair in her face, an utter hopelessness, and then sank back upon the grass crying wildly—
"And that man loved me once!"

There it was—that man had loved her once with the one great love of his life—a love that could be measured only by his scorn and loathing now for the fallen woman who had wronged him. Of all the vile unworthy things upon the earth that night, she was to him the very vilest and most unworthy, as she had once been the most treasured and the best beloved.

At last her passion subsided, and she clutched the money he had given her, counting it, though the tears were in her eyes, to see that there were the full twenty pounds. One had dropped, and she searched carefully and found it; then stowed all away in some receptacle about her, and walked slowly out of the tile-ground.

"I can drink myself dead with these, if I please," she thought; "but I won't do that either. I'll live, if it's only to spite John Thornleigh. But I'll lay in a famous stock of brandy, too. Gin's cheapest, but I can do the thing in style now, so I won't have the vulgar stuff! But I won't touch a drop—I won't buy it, so I can't—till that child Roley Marchdale has been to see me to-morrow. He shall never look at me again as he did once with his innocent blue eyes, and wonder what's amiss!"

John Thornleigh went into his house again, and as he hung up his garden hat, called to his old serving-man—

"Job, I wish you'd lock the gate up earlier.

You'd better begin to do it as soon as the men leave off work. Tramps will come prowling about else, and it's sometimes difficult to get rid of them."

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. WAYBROOKE was very well pleased when Artie's vacation was over, and it was time for him to return to college. He had been anything but a comfort to his mother since Clarie's rejection of him. He had lounged about in a gloomy, misanthropical manner, read Byron and Goethe, and quoted the most melancholy passages from the former; had taken to cigars, and to conversation which was a curious compound of cynicism and slang, and altogether been about as disagreeable and unpleasant an inmate as any one still retaining the habits of a gentleman could very well be. He never mentioned Clarice, and avoided everything that seemed likely to bring the family at the Manor House under discussion. His mother had tried to gain his confidence, but

the attempt was useless. Artie seemed determined that no one should share his secret, so she had to be content with guessing it, and to sit down and feel—as the mothers of grown-up children have to feel—that the time is come for them to hold but a secondary place in their children's hearts.

Artie was no longer her little pet, the rosy curly darling, to whom his mother stood as a second Providence; not even the big boy coming from school to tell his mother of his exploits and trials—sure of her ready sympathy with each. Artie wanted other eyes to shine on him now, and other pulses to throb in unison with his; and being disappointed in the new love he had craved for, he was cruelly ungrateful to that which had for one and twenty years been lavished on him, and suffered Mrs. Waybrooke to grieve over his waywardness and ill-temper with a cold selfishness not at all uncommon to superior young folks when they fancy themselves in love.

However, Artie's affection for Clarice was no fancy, though he amused himself by mentally

designating her as a living petrification, an animated statue, without a heart in her for any man to touch; taking such poor comfort as he could from the thought that she was quite unworthy the honour he had paid her—which was very poor comfort, after all—he was really very miserable, and certainly was to be pitied; but he need not have nursed his misery quite so much, and might have behaved better to his mother. However, in the middle of October he returned to Oxford, and Mrs. Waybrooke settled down into her usual routine of visiting a select few of her own standing in society, a still fewer and more carefully selected number of the poor at Elmsley, to whom she was a sufficiently liberal, though very plain-spoken patroness; filling up her time by wool work and embroidery, to be made up into presents for her daughters, and by writing very lengthy and often very amusing epistles to them.

“Artie will get over his troubles now,” she thought, “poor fellow! I should like to know exactly how things stand between him and the

Marchdales; but I suppose that's not to be expected."

So she wiped her eyes, which were still wet with the thoughts of Artie's sorrows, and sat down to tell her eldest daughter all about Mr. Wendell's approaching marriage.

Miss Becky had her hands full now. Being really an excellent housewife and needlewoman, the purchase and making-up of Magdalene's household linen was a great enjoyment to her. Then, too, there was the preparation of Magdalene's wardrobe; but as this was a still more important affair, she had graciously consented to share its responsibility with Mrs. Marchdale, who undertook to attend to the dresses and bonnets, while Miss Thornleigh provided the equally needful, but less attractive articles. The former lady was very well pleased at this arrangement.

"I wouldn't say so before, my dear," she said; "but I did dread Miss Becky's taste—never mind, we shall have things all our own way now, and as soon as Christmas is turned, we must begin to work

in earnest. And Magdalene," she added, solemnly, "as Mr. Wendell has shown sufficient liberality of feeling to allow Clarie to be one of your bridesmaids, I hope no consideration will induce you to allow them to wear anything but blue. *Nothing* suits Clarie so well, so don't be persuaded into mauve or maize. The last is all very well for dark girls; but it would kill Clarie's complexion, and, as an old friend, I think you really ought to bear that in mind."

Magdalene promised she would do so, and Mrs. Marchdale's mind was satisfied as to her daughter's appearance at the wedding.

All this feminine flutter was a little confusing to Philip Wendell. He had seen so little of women and their ways, that the preparations and discussions about so many minute details connected with the great and important step Magdalene and himself were about to take, struck him as odd and incongruous. So much talk about household gear and plenishing seemed out of keeping with the seriousness of joining heart to heart, and hand to

hand. It was more like setting up a shop, he told Mrs. Marchdale one day, than anything else. Mrs. Marchdale and he were on speaking terms now, and to all appearance liked one another very well.

"There are other things to be thought of, Mr. Wendell," she rejoined, "than the pure sentiment of the matter. Even the birds, pretty creatures! have to build their nests; and however much Magdalene and you may love one another, you'll get on all the better for having things comfortable about you."

Mr. Thornleigh was very liberal with his cheques, and very kind and gentle towards Magdalene. Since she had come to reside with him, the little ruggednesses of his character had become toned down—at least, towards her, though he was still as exacting a master, and as strict and stern in his dealings with the outer world as ever. But he had never been quite himself since the time his eyes encountered Martha Warne's at the Almshouses that bright September day. Magdalene, who had

noticed nothing of the meeting and evident recognition, imputed the change in him to some slight illness, and begged him to have medical advice, or lay by for a while. He told her he had no faith in doctors, and as to resting or laying by as she called it, it was but another name for idleness, which he would never give in to. But Mrs. Marchdale remembered too well the look that Martha Warne had called up in his face not to feel that between the two some secret rested, which John Thornleigh dreaded should be divulged. He had lost something of his upright, soldier-like bearing—he was more silent than ever, and though he still worked hard, it was evidently work which it was an effort to perform, and which wearied him more than it had ever done before. She had once or twice, on her visits to the tile-ground, seen Martha lurking about the place.

On these occasions it had been growing dusk, as the days were rapidly shortening now; and the woman seemed anxious to avoid observation, creeping behind the sheds or the trees; and Mrs.

Marchdale had thought it best to appear not to see her. It seemed very clear that there was some mystery connected with her and the master of the place, though, of all the men in the world, John Thornleigh seemed about the last to have anything of the kind associated with him. Like a wise woman, Mrs. Marchdale said nothing about her suspicions to any one but her husband, and he made light of them.

"John Thornleigh may not always have been so staid an individual as he is now," he observed; "and it is possible the woman may know something of his earlier days. Nothing very bad, I should say; but, still, more than he would like to have known in such a gossiping place as this. Your imagination is too lively by half, Catharine, my dear; don't let it run away with you, and make Mr. Thornleigh the hero of a 'Dead Secret,' or another 'Henry Dunbar.'"

So John Thornleigh went on, never complaining, going about his work as steadily as ever, but still with a cloud hanging over him, that showed

the man was not what he had been; and that whether the illness was of mind or of body, something was amiss with the internal mechanism that had gone on evenly and well so long. So he went on, till the autumn had changed into winter, and Christmas was near at hand, and whether it was the colder weather—colder than it usually is before January—or the secret anxiety—whatever it might be, that preyed upon John Thornleigh's mind—his strength seemed failing rapidly. Miss Becky at last became alarmed, and appealed to Mrs. Marchdale as to whether she did not think her brother required some advice. The projected wedding had thrown the two ladies very much together, and there were so many points connected with Magdalene's outfit, on which they were in unison, that the intercourse was carried on with considerable satisfaction to both parties. Miss Becky, finding Mrs. Marchdale's opinion so often coincide with her own, began to entertain a considerable respect for her judgment, which induced her to consult it on the present occasion.

Mrs. Marchdale scarcely knew what advice to give. There was no doubt that John Thornleigh was very far from well, but whether he stood in need of a doctor was a doubtful question—more doubtful than she cared to intimate to Miss Becky. She suggested change of scene.

“If you could get him away from here, Miss Thornleigh, for a time—don’t you think he’s over-worked himself? A month or two at Brighton might do wonders for him—unless,” she mentally added, “Martha Warne takes a third-class ticket and follows him there.”

“John Thornleigh away for a month!” cried Miss Becky; “you don’t know very much of him, Mrs. Marchdale, or you wouldn’t talk like that. He has never left Elmsley for a day, but to fetch Magdalene here last winter; and what on earth would he do muddling about by himself at the seaside, with no tile-kilns to watch burning, and no men to look after. No, I’ve no doubt Brighton would do him good if he’d go, but he won’t; so I

think there's nothing for it but to call in Dr. Jephson, and see what he says to him."

"Well, then, do so," replied Mrs. Marchdale; "it can't be right for him to go on this way. But don't be alarmed, Miss Thornleigh, there's not much amiss, I daresay; but the cold weather has been trying to many people. Though it's not the cold weather that has tried John Thornleigh," she thought, as she bade good-bye to Miss Becky and Magdalene, and left the house to return home to dinner.

It was nearly five in the afternoon, clear, cold, and frosty, and as Mrs. Marchdale came down the path that led to the gate, she saw, by the light of the moon, a figure, that was unmistakeably John Thornleigh's, standing by the old elm-tree, which had been the means of bringing Magdalene and herself acquainted. He was not alone—a woman, with a deep thick veil, stood by him, and Mrs. Marchdale heard him say—

"You'll have no more, I tell you, woman. This shall be the last, come what will."

"Then something *will* come that other people don't expect, and that will take the fine airs out of some young ladies," was the reply.

Mrs. Marchdale hesitated as to what she had best do—pass John Thornleigh without a word, or go up and speak to him ; but he solved the difficulty himself by coming up to her, and even by the starlight she could see that he looked pale and troubled.

"Good evening, Mrs. Marchdale—good evening. I'll walk part of the way home with you, if you'll allow me."

He went on in silence till they were on the high road, then he looked anxiously round, as if to make sure that there were no eavesdroppers, and said—

"This marriage, Mrs. Marchdale—it's late in the day to speak of such a thing, but do you think, if aught was to happen to break it off—Mr. Wendell change his mind, you know—such things do happen sometimes—Magdalene would feel it very much ? Does she *really* care for him ?—

she's very young. I shouldn't like her to marry for a mere fancy, and be sorry for it all her life after."

"I think Magdalene is as much in love with Mr. Wendell as a girl can very well be," replied Mrs. Marchdale, "and it would be a very serious thing for her if Mr. Wendell were to change his mind, which, however, is not very likely to happen."

"Not very—not very," said Mr. Thornleigh, thoughtfully; "but if it should—if—if—he comes of a good family, they say, and Magda's friends have not all of them been just what they should. Do you think, if anything were to turn up that might seem to be a sort of slur on the girl, he'd stand by her, Mrs. Marchdale?"

"He wouldn't be worth her having if he did not," was the reply, given in earnest. "There are awkward things in many families, but it is always best to have no concealments beforehand in such cases as Magdalene's and Mr. Wendell's. If he should be disposed to break matters off with

her for such a reason, he had much better know it at once than learn it, as he might do, later. It would be an awful thing for his wife to hear that he regretted having made her so. But I have too good an opinion of Mr. Wendell to fear anything of the sort—only, you know, there is nothing like the truth.”

“No—nothing like the truth,” said Mr. Thornleigh, “if one could always think so; but the truth is sometimes hard to tell. Well, thank you—thank you, Mrs. Marchdale; you’ve been very kind to Magdalene. If you knew that—we’ll say—that her mother wasn’t quite all she should be—no, hang it! what’s the good of beating about the bush? If you heard that her mother was a disgrace to the name of woman—the worst and wickedest wretch that ever drove an honest man to madness”—he almost hissed out the words—“you wouldn’t—no, you wouldn’t—whatever her sweetheart might do—you wouldn’t turn from a girl that’s ten times worse than motherless?”

“God forbid!” said Mrs. Marchdale, earnestly.

"I would only try ten times the more to be a mother to her."

"You are a good woman," said John Thornleigh, "and I thank you. Well, I suppose it must be as you say—the truth must be told, let what will come of it."

They were now at Mrs. Marchdale's house, and John Thornleigh parted with her. Mrs. Marchdale went up at once into her own bed-room, and seating herself on the sofa, threw back her shawl, and sat for a time thinking over Mr. Thornleigh's words. It had been very easy to advise him to tell the truth, but she felt that, if the truth involved all she guessed at, it would be hard indeed to tell. How would Philip Wendell bear it?

"He's very much in love, and I think he's a good man; but Martha Warne is not a desirable mother-in-law for a possible bishop. Oh! my poor Magda!—were I your lover, I would carry you off from all the scandal and stir this story will cause, if it were to Christianize the New

Zealanders, or teach the Church Catechism to the Hottentots, sooner than you should be wounded by it. But there's not above one man in a hundred knows what love is in good earnest. My darling Magda, let us hope that Philip Wendell may prove to be that one."

CHAPTER V.

THERE was a stir in the still waters of Elmsley the next morning, such as they had not often known. Mr. Thornleigh had been thrown from his gig on his way to the village. There had been a hard frost in the night, and the roads were like glass; he had ordered his horse to be harnessed directly after breakfast, and when Job had remonstrated, and begged, at least, to have time allowed him to have the shoes roughed, had sharply refused, saying it was but an excuse for dawdling, and his business admitted of no delay.

“It’ll have to be delayed long enough now,” said poor Job, “when master’s never like to speak another word!”

He had been captious and irritable before he started to every one but Magdalene—what in any

person but John Thornleigh would have been called nervous—but who ever thought of his having nerves? He had driven the horse rashly, urged it on at what would have been a great pace if the roads had been perfectly safe, instead of driving with his usual consideration for the animal. And so Betsy, the sure-footed mare, who had never been known to stumble in her life, slipped down, broke the shafts, and threw her master heavily head foremost on the ground, where he was found speechless and stunned soon after by some of his own men, who were passing by with one of his carts. They raised him carefully, and made the best bed they could for him in the cart, and brought him back gently to his own home. Miss Thornleigh saw them coming from her bed-room window.

“Something’s wrong!” she said to Magdalene, who was with her folding up some of the linen for her future household use, and putting it away in a large press—“Something’s wrong—that cart’s no business to be coming back like this. What is it,

Magdalene?—can you see? *What* is it they've got covered up in the cart?"

They looked at each other with scared faces; and then Magdalene, the quickest to remember *who* might be there, and that every moment might be precious, flew down the stairs, opened the front-door, and stood on the steps just as the cart came up.

"Go back, miss," said one of the men, a kindly, good-tempered fellow, who had worked under Mr. Thornleigh for many years. "Go back—this is no sight for you. Please tell Miss Thornleigh and Job they're wanted, and send one of the girls for the doctor."

Magdalene neither screamed nor fainted. It was no time, as she knew, for either, but she ran into the house.

"Susan, go to Mr. Jephson, then to Mr. Marley—they're both wanted here at once. It's life or death. There's no time for dressing. Take my garden-shawl and hat," she threw them to the girl as she spoke. "Job, come with me."

The old serving-man followed her. Miss Becky was now outside, clamorous and crying, but almost powerless to help; but Magdalene uncovered the figure that was lying prostrate in the cart, and saw the still, white face of John Thornleigh. She gave one low moan—she had learned to love that stern hard man ere this—but kept down every other sign of sorrow. She bent her head to John Thornleigh's mouth, and listened to his breathing, and placed her hand upon his heart. Then she looked up with a brighter face.

“There is life yet! Can you carry him gently—there are three of you—to his room?”

She went first, and the men followed with their burden, Miss Becky bringing up the rear. They laid him very carefully upon his bed; and then his sister, who had a little recovered her composure, began to try what simple remedies she knew to restore him to consciousness. But they were utterly powerless—it needed a more skilful hand than hers to bring life back again to John Thornleigh. So there was nothing for them both to do

but to sit down and wait till the doctors came—wait, as women so often have to wait, in utter helplessness, while the very life of the best beloved may be ebbing away before them. That dreary, silent waiting, with the corpse-like figure on the bed. Magdalene never forgot it—never fully realized till now how well she loved the blunt, rough man, who had so often laid aside his hard, stern ways for her.

In her craving for sympathy, she came towards Miss Becky, and laying her head upon her lap, gave vent to the tears she had pent in as long as there was anything else to do but weeping. The first violence of Miss Becky's grief had subsided, but she had been steadily crying since in a quiet, methodical manner, which, however, had not interfered with her attempts to restore her brother to his senses. She spoke, not unkindly, to Magdalene.

“Don't you give way, my child; you've been a good girl to him, which will be a comfort to you if the worst does happen. But let's trust in the Lord it won't.”

The medical men were not long in coming—first Dr. Jephson, and then Mr. Marley ; but they spoke very gravely of the case. It was possible John Thornleigh might return to consciousness—just possible—but ultimate recovery was out of the question. And all the time he lay there so still and quiet, with so little sign of outward hurt, that but for the pallor of his face, he might have been thought asleep.

Dr. Jephson was not the medical attendant of Miss Becky or her brother, for the simple reason that neither, since their residence in Elmsley, had ever required the services of one, both having been blessed with excellent health ; but the Dr. was employed by Mr. Joseph Thornleigh, and knowing the whole family, he felt it incumbent on him to call Miss Becky out of the chamber, and ask her if she knew whether her brother had arranged his affairs.

“ If not, it is possible—it is just possible that he may rally sufficiently to do so.”

But Miss Becky could tell him nothing positively—she did not believe her brother had ever made

a will. She had heard him once say he would do so when Magdalene's settlements were drawn up; but knew nothing further. Dr. Jephson went away, promising to return soon, and Mr. Marley followed him. Then a great stillness came over the house, and the servants went about with hushed voices and grave faces, and Miss Becky and Magdalene remained in the sick-chamber as before—waiting—waiting—for death, or the glimmer of life that might perchance precede it.

Presently Mrs. Joseph Thornleigh came round with her daughters—the latter entering the sick-room on tiptoe with their handkerchiefs to their eyes—and looked at the motionless figure on the bed, and cried a little, and spoke in whispers to Miss Becky; but almost ignored Magdalene's presence. She understood it—there was no need now for the over-civility they had shown her—her protector was powerless now; well, it was a relief to be let alone by those who could never understand her sorrow, or know how she had learned to love him.

The Misses Thornleigh were decorously sorry for their uncle—their mother really grieving for him; for, in his homely way, John Thornleigh had always treated her with the respect and consideration due to his brother's wife—she had been a little jealous of Magdalene, looking upon her as a possible defrauder of her children; but the sight of the girl's sorrow appealed to the motherliness of her nature, and she addressed her with some simple words of sympathy.

Before long Mr. Joseph Thornleigh made his appearance, a telegraphic message having been despatched to his office in London, and then the two doctors looked in again as they had promised they would do. There was a slight change for the better, and by the evening John Thornleigh had recovered sufficient consciousness to utter Magdalene's name, and to press her hand when she placed it in his. Brother and sister might as well have been absent for all the apparent thought or care he had for them now. He lay still and motionless as before, holding Magdalene's hand tightly clasped,

however ; and she sat by him through the long night, now and then moistening his lips with the stimulants the doctors had prescribed, and getting what slender rest she could by leaning against a pillow Miss Becky had placed at the back of her chair.

Philip Wendell had been in London all day, and had not heard the ill-news till his return late in the evening. He came to the bedside of the dying man, who recognised his voice when he spoke, for he half-opened his eyes, and moaned—it was not with bodily pain, for Magdalene thought she heard the words “Too late!” as she bent over him. Miss Becky in this time of trouble was very kind, after her own fashion, to Magdalene; Mr. Joseph Thornleigh decently civil. He had never been at all satisfied with Magdalene’s position in the family; and mingling with regret for his brother came anxious thoughts as to his having provided by will for Magdalene.

He had sorely grudged the five thousand pounds that was to have been settled on Magdalene; and

even with his brother dying before his eyes, he could not help experiencing a little secret satisfaction at the thought that it might not be hers after all. He had received his brother's instructions as to the settlements, but they had not as yet been put in hand; and should John Thornleigh not recover, it would, in Mr. Joseph's estimation, be a piece of Quixotic charity to rob his family to such an amount for the sake of benefiting a mere stranger. He had very good reasons for believing that his brother had made no will. The subject had often been discussed between them, and John Thornleigh had even specified the different legacies he intended to bequeath to his nephew and nieces, and the provision he meant to make for Miss Becky. But this had been only talk, and like many a man in health and strength, John Thornleigh had deferred the carrying out his intentions till it was no longer in his power to fulfil them.

Joseph Thornleigh reflected with a grim satisfaction that he was his brother's heir-at-law; Miss

Becky would have her share of the personal estate, but the freehold property would, as was only just, all fall to him. He would behave liberally to Miss Grant; she should have her wedding clothes and a hundred pounds, and Mr. Wendell could hardly expect more—for whatever Magdalene's claims might have been on his brother, she had none on him, and he had his own children to see to. Having so far settled matters, Mr. Joseph Thornleigh sent his daughters home; then, partaking of as good a supper as the servants had been able to prepare under the circumstances, returned to the bedroom, and informed Miss Becky he should remain there all night.

"There's no occasion for you to sit up, Mary," he considerately added, turning to his wife. "I've told the maids to get a room ready for you, so you had better go and lie down—and we'll send for you if any change takes place. It's no good knocking yourself up. You may as well go down first, though, and see if you can find anything to eat."

Mrs. Joseph Thornleigh meekly withdrew to sup on her lord's leavings; and then, without undressing, lay down in Miss Becky's chamber. Her husband, staying in the adjoining room with his brother, put his slippers on his feet upon the fender, leaned back in an easy chair, and so remained through the night, now and then dropping off to sleep for a short time, and then rising and proceeding towards the patient, to see if there were any signs of improvement. Still Magdalene remained at her post, unflinching, and to all appearance unwearied; and with the morning light her cares obtained some reward, for John Thornleigh opened his eyes and looked round. He was evidently quite conscious now, and Magdalene began to form fresh hopes. He dropped her hand as if he felt she must be weary of her position, then murmured,

“Kiss me, Magda.”

She stooped and pressed her lips to his cheek, and flung her arms over him, as if by their embrace she could hold him back from death.

The door opened, and Philip Wendell entered the room, in company with Dr. Jepson. The latter pronounced that there was an improvement for the present in his patient, and told Miss Becky to continue the stimulants, and promised to call again in a couple of hours.

Then Mr. Joseph Thornleigh thought it permissible to take some breakfast, and went downstairs to do so. He could hardly avoid asking Philip Wendell to share it with him, and the two partook of the meal in company with Mrs. Joseph, who, early as the hour was, had taken care that all should be in readiness for her lord after his night's watching. Susan carried up coffee to Miss Becky and Magdalene, neither of whom would quit her post, and the breakfast below proceeded in the dreary comfortless way common to such occasions in a house of mourning. Mrs. Joseph meekly poured out the coffee, and said nothing, but ate as much as usual.

Her husband confined himself to a few remarks, appropriate, he considered, to the circumstances

and the presence of a clergyman ; not forgetting, however, to find fault with the way the toast was buttered, and the eggs boiled. Philip said no more than in civility he was bound to do in answer to Mr. Joseph's remarks, his whole thoughts being with the pale, patient girl upstairs. How he longed to take the coffee from Susan's hand and carry it to her. How gladly he would have waited on her as a servant if she would have suffered him. But he sat still instead, eating his dry toast, and drinking his coffee with these two elderly people, when a loud, imperative voice, doubly startling from the stillness that for the last four-and-twenty hours had pervaded the house, broke on their ears.

“Don't stop me, girl!—I tell you I *will* see him! Dying, is he?—then the more need I should. There's no one on earth has a better right to be with him now than I have! Stand off, I say, or I may do you a mischief!—I'm not too nice when my temper's up!”

There was a scuffling in the passage, and pre-

sently Susan rushed in, with her cap off her head, her hair loose, and a flushed, frightened face.

“Oh! Mrs. Thornleigh, ma'am, what shall I do?—I don't know whether she's a fortune-teller or not, but I've seen her often prowling about the place after dark o' nights; and now she *will* come in, and I can't shut her out. Lor' a'mercy! here she is!”

The girl flew to the other side of the room, and cowered down, as if for protection, by Philip Wendell, when, the door opening, Martha Warne entered the room. She looked disdainfully at the persons present, and then taking the arm-chair from which Mr. Joseph Thornleigh had just risen, said, as she seated herself in it,

“If you'd been a gentleman, you'd have offered it to me.”

“Oh! Lord! she's mad,” gasped Susan, “or she'd never come here like this, and master in such a state; and there's Job gone to the doctor's for more physic; and it's three miles to the police-station.”

"Drunk, more likely," said Philip Wendell, in a low voice, apart, to Joseph Thornleigh.

But he was mistaken; Martha Warne was scarcely more drunk than mad at the present time; but it was some weeks since she had been perfectly sober, having been able to supply herself only too plentifully with stimulants, owing to the money she obtained from Mr. Thornleigh. She had only heard of his fall and dangerous condition that morning, and the news had thrown her into a state of excitement and passionate regret. John Thornleigh, dying and helpless, was altogether a different person to the hard, proud man, who had spurned and taunted, and flung his gold to her as he would a bone to a dog, to keep him from biting. She rushed off at once to see him, if possible, before he closed his eyes, muttering to herself—"He may forgive!—he may forgive!—and if he does, I'll give up the drink for ever!"

She had been crying all the way—her face was swollen with tears; but whatever gentler feelings might have been called forth by the tidings of the

approaching death of one to whom she had once been very dear, these were all now dispersed by Susan's peremptory refusal to permit her to see her master; and the sight of the cold, indignant faces that greeted her on her entrance into the parlour, called up all that was evil and malicious in her nature.

"I don't know who all of you are!" she exclaimed, glancing scornfully around, and then fixing her eyes upon Mrs. Joseph^{Joseph} with a vindictive stare, that made even that placid lady alarmed; "but you seem making yourselves very comfortably at home, considering the master of the house is dying upstairs. However, I'll trouble one or the other of you to tell me which is his room, for *I'm* not going to neglect him, whatever others may do!"

"Get her out quietly," whispered Philip to Mr. Joseph, as he saw that gentleman's colour deepening from crimson to purple; "she scarcely knows what she says."

Mr. Joseph composed himself, and said—

"My good woman, my brother is in a very dangerous state, and no one but his own immediate relatives can possibly be allowed to see him."

"Of course not—of course not," replied Martha; "and that's just why I am here. It's just because it's a time for only those who are nearest of kin to be about him, that I thought it was my duty to come. I haven't been all that I should to John Thornleigh, and I shouldn't like him to go out of the world without saying he'd forgive me. God knows I've cause enough to ask him!"

"I am afraid it would be useless, my good woman," said the Curate. "Mr. Thornleigh is almost unconscious."

"Don't go telling me that!" Martha exclaimed; "he won't go out of the world so. I don't believe it, either," she added, fiercely. "You're all leagued together to keep me out of the room till he's dead and gone. Talk of his relations, indeed!—is there one that has as good a right to be with him as his wife?—even if she hasn't been

such a good one as she should be—more need she should ask him to forgive her now.”

“His wife!” cried Mrs. Joseph Thornleigh—even her meek spirit was roused by such an assumption on the part of Martha Warne. It was too much to have to recognise such a sister-in-law.

“His wife!” repeated Mr. Joseph. “This is carrying things too far, my good woman. Everyone knows that my brother has never been married at all.”

“Do they know?” said Martha, mockingly—“they’re wise folks if they do, then. I suppose you think you know all about his doings in Australia, when he was away for nigh two years, and never wrote you a line all the time? We weren’t genteel enough then, you see, to send you cards, and letters are a great bother. He never told you of his wife?—well, perhaps he’d cause. They didn’t get on too well together—quarrelled, as fine folks will do, and thought they should be best apart; but the girl he married then is living

now, and let what will have come and gone, I don't think *you'll* find it easy to do away with the marriage. I suppose this bit of paper goes some way to prove it."

She produced from a small leather case, tied round her neck, a paper, which she opened, and keeping at a safe distance from Mr. Joseph Thornleigh, displayed it to him.

"Whatever it may be," he said, crossly, "I can't see it at that distance. Let me have it here."

"Don't you wish it?" was the reply, given with a meaning smile—"not that this is all I've got to show, but it's too precious to be parted with. But I don't mind Mr. Wendell looking at it. Take it in your own hands, sir—I'm not afraid of you."

Philip Wendell looked at the paper carefully. It was a marriage certificate, dated more than twenty years back, and duly authenticated. The marriage purported to have taken place in one of the Episcopal churches in Melbourne, and there

was nothing on the face of the document to lead to a suspicion that it was otherwise than genuine. But Philip Wendell turned pale as he read it, for this marriage was stated to have been solemnized between John Thornleigh and Martha Grant. Grant!—how came his Magdalene to bear that name? He gave the certificate back, however, without further comment than—

“This seems a genuine document, but it remains to be proved whether you are the Martha Grant spoken of here.”

“Exactly,” was the reply. “All I ask is—take me to my husband, and see if he’ll disown me. I don’t think he will, for he’d hardly die with a lie in his mouth.”

“This is shameful!—this is shameful!” cried Mr. Joseph Thornleigh; “it is a plot—a got-up thing. What’s a bit of paper, and a pretended marriage in Australia, between a man who’s called himself a bachelor all his life, and a woman no one has ever seen or heard of before?”

A double knock was heard, and Dr. Jepson

and Mrs. Marchdale came in together. The former went upstairs to his patient, and Mrs. Marchdale entered the parlour. She started back with surprise at the sight of Martha Warne; then, bowing to Mrs. Joseph, with whom her acquaintance was very slight, and to that lady's husband, with whom it was slighter still, went up to Mr. Wendell.

"We only heard the bad news late last night, and I thought I would come round the first thing, and see myself how matters were going, and if we could be of any use. How is Mr. John Thornleigh?" she added, turning to Mrs. Joseph, who shook her head, and raised her eyes, endeavouring thereby to intimate the worst; and Martha Warne now spoke—

"I am so glad you have come, ma'am. You've been a good friend to me—a better than I deserve—and I ask you if it's right I should be kept from my husband on his death-bed. I won't be, either!" she added, turning fiercely on Mr. Joseph; "I've a great mind to order every one of you out of the

house—for when all's said and done, I'm mistress of it."

A message came from upstairs to the effect that Mr. Thornleigh, having rallied sufficiently to speak, had asked for his brother and Mr. Wendell. It was even so. He had been lying for a long time with Magdalene's hand clasped in his; and when Dr. Jephson entered the room, had shown evident signs of distress and uneasiness, and at last asked for his brother and the Curate.

"Wants to provide for the poor girl," thought the good-natured doctor. "It'll be a bad look-out for her if he's made no will. She won't get much from Mr. Joseph's tender mercies. However, it shall be no fault of mine if he don't know his brother's intentions, whether he chooses to carry them out or not."

"Mrs. Marchdale is downstairs, my dear sir; would you like to see her too? I think my young friend here would find her a comfort."

John Thornleigh nodded assent.

"I'll have as many as I can in the room,"

thought Dr. Jephson ; " Mr. Joseph shan't do the shabby thing too easily !"

" Ah ! he don't know I'm here !" cried Martha, when the message was delivered by Susan's fellow-servant—" how should he, when nobody's had the civility to tell him ! I'll go first, if you please. Now, young woman," addressing the terrified Charlotte, " show me the way."

" For common decency's sake, don't go in this excited state !" cried Philip Wendell. " If Mr. Thornleigh is indeed your husband, give us some time to prepare him for the interview, and do you compose yourself meanwhile."

She shook him off angrily, and darted up the stairs, opening first one door and then another, till she found herself in the room where John Thornleigh lay. For a moment the woman's audacity appalled those who had been trying to keep her back ; then Mrs. Marchdale, saying, " We must follow her, and prevent as much mischief as we can," went up the stairs, followed by Mr. Joseph and Philip Wendell.

On finding herself in the chamber she sought, Martha looked eagerly round for him she claimed as husband, while the curtains of the bed prevented his seeing her. Miss Becky, who was sitting by the fire, rose angrily at the appearance of the intruder ; and the doctor, equally surprised, held up a warning finger. But Martha heeded neither. She came towards the bedstead, and when Dr. Jephson would have intervened, took him by the arm and swung him out of her way. It was not difficult to do ; he was a short, rotund man, and not prepared for such decided measures. Then she came to the bedside where lay the dying man, with the girl by his side to whom, let him have been as stern and hard as he might to others, he had never shown aught but kindness.

“ You haven’t sent for me, John ; but I’ve come without waiting for that,” she said.

John Thornleigh turned his eyes upon her, and something of the shame and dread he had shown at their first recent meeting came into his face, and Magdalene felt his grasp of her tightening.

"John!—John! won't you speak to me now?"

He looked round, and saw Mrs. Marchdale, his brother, and Philip Wendell.

"Take—take that woman away!" he murmured.

"John—John, don't be too hard! I am your wife after all—if I'm *not*, what's that girl by your side?"

Philip Wendell had passed his strong arm round Martha, intending, if need were, to remove her by main force, but he paused now. John Thornleigh's lips quivered, as he saw Magdalene's dilating eyes fixed in a very agony of questioning upon the wild, fierce-looking woman who thus spoke of her.

"Let her be," he murmured—"let her be."

"Ain't I your wife, John? Ain't I, after all?"

John Thornleigh looked at Magdalene.

"I suppose it's the only thing to be done now. There isn't time for anything else. It must be, my poor lass, it must be!" he moaned. Then, raising his voice, he said, with all his failing

strength—"That woman is my wife. Magdalene Grant here is my child and hers—born in lawful wedlock—and, for God's sake, keep her mother from her!"

"I told you all so!" cried Martha, exultingly. "He wouldn't die with a lie in his mouth. John, John, won't you say anything more? Don't let's part in anger. Won't you forgive me now?"

"Take her away," was the low, stern answer. "She's not fit to be where honest women are!"

But there was no effort made by any one to move her now. It would have seemed too awful to tear the wife by sheer force from her dying husband's presence. Philip Wendell whispered to her—

"Keep out of his sight. I will speak to him about you presently; but if you stay here you must be calm."

John Thornleigh closed his eyes, and Dr. Jephson bent over him anxiously. Presently he rallied, and Magdalene felt her hand tightly pressed.

"Magdalene—Magda, kiss me, my child!"

Her arms were tightly round him, and her kisses raining on him.

"Father ! father ! father !" the cry rang through the room. "Father ! father ! you won't leave me now !"

She was sobbing passionately, burying her head in the bedclothes ; but a strange smile, so sweet and tender, that it gave John Thornleigh's face a character it had never worn before, came across it.

"Yes—father !—father ! I should have taught her to call me so years ago. My little Magda !—she made me love her at last—my little Magda !"

He looked round anxiously—something he saw in Philip Wendell's face troubled him.

"She couldn't help having such a mother !" he said, in a plaintive, appealing tone—a strange tone for John Thornleigh's lips to utter. "She'll make a good wife, none the less."

There was a darkness and a mist before his eyes, for his hand was faintly groping for Magdalene. Mrs. Marchdale came forward, and placed it upon her hair. There was a heavy sigh—

"Ah! my lass, God bless thee!" and then a dull, dead silence, broken by an outcry from Martha.

"He's gone! I know it! Oh! you needn't look, sir. I've seen death as often as you, though, may be, not in such places as this. He's gone!—and never a word for me! John! John! come back to say that you forgive me!"

But John Thornleigh had gone where neither wife could trouble nor child comfort him more; and Magdalene was weeping, as only the young can weep, upon Mrs. Marchdale's bosom, for him whom she had known as a father one moment, but to lose him in the next.

CHAPTER VI.

YES, it was even so—John Thornleigh, who, till his last hour, had been believed by his nearest kin to be unmarried, had, dying, owned to both wife and daughter; and Joseph Thornleigh saw his brother's property, which he had considered as fully secured to his children as his own, likely to be lost for ever to them. He would have disputed Mrs. John Thornleigh's claims to that title, and its consequent advantages, but the death-bed avowal of his brother left no opening for him to do so, or to question Magdalene's legitimacy. And the loss of the property was by no means the only evil, though a sufficiently serious one; but to have such a woman as Martha bearing the same name as his wife and daughters, and disgracing the whole family by her disreputable antecedents, and

present course of conduct, was, for the time, even a keener annoyance. He was not a poor man, and though his brother's thousands would have been very acceptable, he could do without them; but the disgrace and scandal of such a connection, the notoriety of the whole affair, the consciousness that it was the subject of the village animadversions, made him feel as if existence in Elmsley, after such a family exposure, would be scarcely bearable.

Mrs. Marchdale had removed Magdalene at once to her own house, and Miss Becky had gone to her brother, upon whom, however, she was not entirely dependent, having had a small income bequeathed to her ten years previously by her uncle, the miller. She talked of taking a small cottage, when she could meet with one to suit her; meanwhile her society was anything but a pleasure to her nieces, as they had to receive, with what patience they might, the lectures and counsels that had before been bestowed upon Magdalene, who was moreover held up to them as an example of the

profitableness and expediency of being guided by so sage a monitress. Miss Becky was by no means well-pleased with her sister-in-law ; but her heart warmed to Magdalene as her brother's child, and besides, she took all the credit to herself of Philip Wendell's offer.

"There's a deal of sense in Mr. Wendell," she would observe. "He soon saw that Magdalene could do other things for a clergyman than just work at his pulpit cushions. And let a man be what he may, he don't want a poor die-away thing that can't put her ten fingers to any earthly use whatever. I took good care that shouldn't be the case with Magdalene, and you see, girls, what's come of it. Six years younger than either of you, and engaged already to the best match in Elmsley. Well, I dare say it isn't too late in the day for you, and now I'm likely to be here some time, I shall make good use of it, and see if I can't make something of you two after all."

Mrs. John Thornleigh remained at the house in the tile-yard. She had requested Mr. Joseph

Thornleigh to give suitable directions for the funeral, and behaved herself with tolerable decorum, ordering her widow's weeds, and desiring the servants to provide themselves with suitable mourning. Then, when the last mournful honours had been paid to John Thornleigh, she acquainted his brother with her intention of dismissing all the men, giving them each a month's wages, and throwing up the business altogether, as she was quite incapable of attending to it herself, and had plenty to live on without it.

Mr. Joseph Thornleigh replied that he had his niece's interests to consult, and that as she would become a ward in Chancery, it remained to be seen whether the Chancellor would not direct the business to be carried on, till a purchaser could be found for it. Mrs. John Thornleigh looked at him with a little surprise.

"Ward in Chancery! as if her own mother wasn't the best person to take care of her! Let her come back here and stay with me, and I dare say we shall get on very well together after a bit;

and I'll take care the parson has the five thousand pounds her father promised her, and a little more, too, if he's in any want of it."

"Of course Magdalene will take her two thirds of my late brother's property," replied Joseph Thornleigh stiffly; "so that Mr. Wendell will have a much larger fortune with his wife than he expected—that is, supposing the marriage still takes place."

"Her two thirds, indeed!" cried Mrs. John, looking very indignantly at her brother-in-law. "She'll have just as much or as little as I please to give her, and that 'll depend upon the way she behaves herself."

"My late brother leaving no will, the principal part of his fortune goes to his daughter, while his widow takes but her third."

"Her third! what on earth does the man mean?" said Mrs. John, looking at him with a whole world of contempt flashing out of her dark eyes. "You're precious mistaken if you think your brother did not leave a will. He made one a month after I

married him; and I have had lawyers' advice about it since, and if there's no later one found, which don't seem to be likely, it's as good a will as ever was written; and in a day or two I'm going to Doctors' Commons to prove it, and if you're curious about it by-and-bye you may pay your shilling for reading it—or I don't mind letting you see it now, if you keep at a safe distance. I don't want you too near, as there's a fire in the room."

She produced a document, which, as far as Mr. Joseph was permitted to see, looked like a will, drawn up and witnessed in due form.

"You see," she continued, in a bantering tone, "I haven't given my business to you—family affairs are best settled by strangers; perhaps by-and-bye I shan't mind putting other matters in your way."

"Much obliged to you, ma'am, but it is scarcely likely you and I shall see very much of one another; and nothing but a consideration for my niece's interests would have induced me to enter upon this discussion. I should certainly have

liked to examine that will a little more closely ; but I will not press the point at present. I can only say, if my poor brother was infatuated enough to make such a will, it was only exceeded by one other piece of folly, and that was his marriage. I wish you good morning, ma'am."

Mr. Joseph Thornleigh had his suspicions as to the authenticity of the will ; but it was not worth his while to dispute it. Mr. Marchdale, however, was not satisfied to let matters rest so, and was determined to ascertain if Magdalene was left entirely dependent upon the woman who called herself her mother. Martha threw no impediments in his way—she allowed the will to be perused by his family solicitor, and was quite ready to give any information connected with it. Even Mr. Joseph Thornleigh could not deny that the signature was in his brother's handwriting ; and there seemed no reason to doubt that the will was a genuine one, and that it would be impossible to disprove or set it aside.

Martha told her own story of her marriage,

suppressing, however, a few subsequent facts—less from a desire to impose upon others, than that it seemed to her the first step towards a new and better life, was to conceal how wholly bad the past had been. But Mrs. Marchdale was not very much deceived, nor did she err greatly in believing that Martha had left her husband for more serious reasons than ill-temper on her part, and hard words on his. It was very long before she knew the whole truth—not till years after, when the time came that the wretched woman was glad to unburthen her soul, and gasp out the full confession of her sins and follies. But by me that story may as well be told at once—it is a sad and sinful page—let us glance at it quickly, and then turn it over, and have done with it :—

John Thornleigh was five-and-thirty when he first saw Martha Grant. He was then on board an emigrant-ship bound to Australia, and she was one of his fellow-passengers. Before that time he had been farm-bailiff on an estate near his native village, and, tempted by the offer of better wages

from his employer's cousin, who required the services of a trustworthy man on his lands in the colony, went out with this gentleman, who had engaged him while on a visit to England. John had never been in love in his life, never even been guilty of the weakness of sending a valentine, or buying a fairing for a pretty girl—never thought of a woman but as a necessary household appendage, something fit to make and mend, brew and bake, but about whom the less a man who had his way to make in the world troubled himself the better. And Martha became to this cold, hard man the object of the passion of his life. Her bright, capricious beauty held him like a spell, puzzling, bewitching, and enthralling him. She was then about twenty—a wilful, vain, coquettish girl—and worse. Full of impulses, which were sometimes generous ones, but totally devoid of principle. She was an orphan, and had lived as servant in several families, and losing her character in her last situation, through accepting too readily the attentions of her young master, she

made up her mind to emigrate—less with the idea of doubling her wages as a domestic servant, than with the hope of making a good match in a part of the world “where a poor girl wouldn’t be looked down upon like the dirt, because she had her living to get.” John Thornleigh proposed to her before the voyage was half over, and was accepted. He had money in the bank, and a good situation, and Martha really liked him a little. He believed in her implicitly, and was as thoroughly blinded and deceived as a man so totally unused to women, and so madly in love, was likely to be.

They were married soon after landing, and John Thornleigh’s first step, before proceeding further into the unknown country they were to dwell in, was to take the best care he could of his young wife by bequeathing her all he possessed. It was not much—only a couple of hundreds in the Exeter bank; but it was his all, and was given to her unreservedly; and fully believing in his capacities for increasing his store, he had the will so worded that it would require no alteration,

let him make what addition he might to his possessions. Then they travelled inland, and settled on the estate of which John was to take the management, and for a little time—a very little time—John Thornleigh was happy with his wife. He had not written to acquaint his brother and sister with the change in his condition. He was not much given to writing, and, besides, a little natural shyness deterred him from putting pen to paper to tell them he—the professed inveterate old bachelor—had taken a wife unto himself.

But the still, quiet life in the new country, with all its homely comforts and plenty, became wearisome to Martha after a while. There were no shops to see—no fellow-servants to gossip with—and more than all, no one to tell her what a pretty face she had, and to talk the nonsense it was so pleasant to listen to. Hers was a nature that required constant excitement—and what possible excitement was there in this quiet farm, in a new and thinly-peopled country? She had a good home, but it was intensely dull; plenty of

pretty dresses, but who was there to admire them? She grew irritable, and difficult to please, and led John Thornleigh a trying life. But he bore with her with wonderful patience, promising even to give up his situation if she found the sameness of the life she led unsupportable. It was not very long, however, before a change came to both him and her.

The natives near them had been troublesome of late, and a detachment of soldiers was sent out to restore matters to a peaceable footing. For a short time they made their head-quarters at the farm of which John Thornleigh was manager. Martha was very well pleased with the new faces and the bright uniforms—more so than John Thornleigh approved of, especially when he found that one Warne was selected from the rest by her to laugh and gossip with. But he loved his wife, and was slow to suspect any greater wrong than a little idle nonsense, that Martha would forget as soon as the soldiers were gone. After a time they left the neighbourhood, and he trusted that she would think no more of them.

But she was now more than ever restless and impatient of the dulness, and at last her husband had good reason to suspect her of having recourse to drink to deaden her sense of it. Then he remonstrated—speaking the first angry word she had ever heard from him. She turned upon him like a fury—all the evil in her wild fierce nature displayed itself—she scoffed, and mocked, and jeered, told him from the first she had never cared for him—that he had been married only for his savings, and that she hated him for the dull, weary life he had condemned her to lead. John never forgave her that—I think he could have forgiven a great deal if he had only thought he had been once beloved. But to learn that he had all along been fooled and deceived—all his good honest love made a matter of speculation—turned his heart's blood into gall. They led a wretched life after this, and at last John came home one day to find his wife had left him. He learned afterwards that she had arranged matters with Warne, and had escaped to join him.

John Thornleigh gave up his situation, and returned to England a moody, sullen man; he would not go back to his native place, preferring to live where he was unknown; and being offered work in the tile-yard at Elmsley, took it, finding nothing better, and soon saw his way to make his labours there the stepping-stone to a fair competence. Things were going well with him when, having made up his mind to let his sister know where he was, he, soon after doing so, received through her a letter written at his wife's request, and addressed to him at his native place. She was dying, it said, at Portsmouth, and the child, of which he was the father, and which was unborn when she left him, would be destitute if he did not provide for it. John Thornleigh was a hard man, but a just. He resolved to do his duty by this worse than orphan, as far as attending to its material wants was concerned, but never to own it as a child—never to suffer it to guess its parentage. To his relations he had preserved a perfect silence as to his marriage, simply saying

he had found life in Australia not much to his liking, and had come back little better than he went; so that he now felt doubly disinclined to own the child, and reveal the story of his wretched marriage and subsequent dishonour.

The child was sent to him at a place of his own appointing—a small sea-side village, not far from Portsmouth; and there, finding a school—Miss Grandison's—he placed the little creature at it, stating that it was an orphan, and he its guardian. Never hearing more of his wife, he concluded she was dead; and when, upon Miss Grandison's death, he brought Magdalene to Elmsley, he resolved still to maintain his character of guardian alone. He had no instinctive love for her as his child; but gradually, in spite of his memories of the wretched woman whose fatal beauty she inherited, Magdalene won on him, and he began, at times, to regret that his long silence as to his marriage, and the tacit understanding between his brother and himself, that the children of the former would inherit the property he had acquired, made it so

difficult now for him to reveal the truth. Then came the sudden shock of Martha's appearance, and he felt that to acknowledge Magdalene now would be doubly hard, when she had such a mother living. He dreaded Philip Wendell's learning the truth—it might induce him to break his engagement, and with it the girl's heart; he wavered, and hesitated, till, at last, the night after he had hinted the secret to Mrs. Marchdale, and she had urged on him to tell the truth, at all risks, he resolved to do so, and had started for the purpose, when he met with the accident which brought on his death.

And now Magdalene was dependent on her mother, who, under the will John Thornleigh had executed more than twenty years before, took all his savings—houses, lands, money in the funds, furniture, business, everything. The will was very simple, but very comprehensive—"I give and bequeath all the property of every description that I may die possessed of, to my beloved wife Martha!"

So it ran, greatly to Martha's satisfaction, when she found herself mistress of all her husband's manifold possessions.

"Who'd have thought that bit of paper, that I've been tempted sometimes to tear 'up and fling in the fire, would have been worth so much ! Well, I'm a lady at last, with a good house to live in, silk dresses to wear, and servants to wait upon me. I'll try and be respectable now—I think it's time ; and when that girl of mine comes back, I'll dress her like a duchess, and give her a maid to herself, and a horse to ride on ; and if she marries, I'll go shares with her in all her father's left. She shall find she's got a good mother, after all !"

But Magdalene appeared to have inherited her father's abhorrence of her mother. The woman was not a fit person for a young innocent girl to live with. Still, when Mrs. John Thornleigh asked Mrs. Marchdale when she would let her have her daughter again, that lady felt herself bound to tell Magdalene what she had said, and to ask if she intended all her life to remain a stranger

to her one surviving parent. But she was scarcely prepared for the force and intensity with which the girl resented the question.

"I think for us two to be strangers is the best thing we can be, Mrs. Marchdale. It may seem a hard thing for mother and daughter to be so, but it is a thousand times better than that they should be enemies—and we shall be very bitter ones if we see too much of each other. I loved my father long before I knew that he was so, and I can have nothing in common with the woman who wronged and deserted him."

"But, Magdalene, you have your future husband's interests to think of," urged Mrs. Marchdale. "Remember it rests entirely with Mrs. Thornleigh whether your late father's intentions respecting you will be carried out."

Magdalene bit her red lips, and flushed angrily.

"I don't know why I need think of that, Mrs. Marchdale. It isn't every man who would marry Martha Thornleigh's daughter. I dare not blame Mr. Wendell if he hesitates to do so. But I will

never, not even for him, be false to the memory of my father, and truckle to her now he is dead, whom, living, he would never have suffered to come near me. I—I know I'm not trespassing on your kindness, for it seems inexhaustible, but in case Mr. Wendell should think it wise or fit to cancel our engagement,"—she gave a great gulp—a gulp that swallowed many sobs, and went on—"you'll help me—put me in a way to earn my living. I must not be dependent on you always, and I will never ask the woman who bears my father's name for help. If she likes to give me what he intended for me as my right, I will receive it as such—I will owe nothing to her as a favour."

Magdalene was emphatically her father's daughter—hard and stern, and unforgiving in her way as he was in his ; but Mrs. Marchdale could not blame her. She remembered John Thornleigh's dying words—

"For God's sake, keep her mother from her !"

"Well, my darling," she said, caressingly, "of

course you know you are welcome here, and we must see what can be done by appealing to Mrs. Thornleigh's sense of justice; but in any case I don't suppose we shall have to look out for a situation for you as governess or drawing mistress. Philip Wendell will take good care of that."

Magdalene smiled mournfully; she was not at all sure that Philip Wendell would—neither in her heart of hearts, though she spoke so hopefully, was Mrs. Marchdale.

CHAPTER VII.

“HAD I been anything but a priest!—anything but a priest!” was Philip Wendell’s inward cry, as he thought over Magdalene’s story, and the wretched woman who called herself her mother.

He was a gentleman born, and had the instincts of his class; still he would never have shrunk from marrying Magdalene, let her parentage have been as lowly as it might, so long as it was respectable and honest. But he recoiled from the idea of connecting himself with such a creature as Martha Thornleigh. Had he been *but* a gentleman, he would never have suffered her to come between him and his love; but he was more—a priest, of what he believed to be the purest and holiest Church on earth, and, as a priest, it seemed

to him he had no right to bring a stain or discredit on himself or his ministry, by marrying the daughter of Martha Thornleigh. He suffered intensely in the struggle; and the more he suffered, the more he persuaded himself that he was doing right in sacrificing his dearest and tenderest affections rather than risk any stigma upon a servant of the Church. Had he loved Magdalene less, I believe he would have been much less ready to resign her.

It was the feeling that he was, as it were, tearing the very heart out of his bosom, that made him fancy he was doing God and the Church good service by offering up this sacrifice. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out—if thy right hand, cast it from thee." And, though his precious, beautiful Magdalene, in her helplessness and her sorrow, had not offended him, was she fit to be as eye or hand to one who had vowed himself soul and body to God's ministry? Was she now, with the brand of her disgraceful parentage upon her, a fit wife for a labourer in the Lord's vineyard? And

strong in the very agony of his self-inflicted martyrdom, Philip Wendell sternly said that she was not, and, like an offending eye or hand, he must put her from him.

I don't defend him. Not for a moment. I say that it was a hard and cruel thing for him to do—that in thinking in this matter only of his Church and his priesthood, he was belying something higher and holier than either. Only let it be borne in mind that the motives which impelled him to this cruelty and hardness were not mean and ignoble ones, however far astray they led him.

But how to tell Magdalene that they must part—how break it to the girl who had given her heart into his keeping, that he must give it back, and that they two who had looked forward to have every hope and interest in common, were to be as strangers to each other, treading diverging paths that in this world could have no meeting?

“But she will see the need of it—my noble, my darling Magdalene! She will know that it is not for myself I do this, but for that Church of

which I have vowed myself a priest. Will it be any comfort to her to know that if I put her from me I will never take another in the place she should have filled? No other woman shall ever share the home I had hoped that Magdalene would gladden."

He was very miserable all the time he was working himself up to the exceeding folly of sacrificing his love and himself to his ideal of true unspotted service to his Church—so miserable, that if I were *not* a woman, with the memory of Magdalene's agony before me, I could find it in my heart to pity him.

Which was a great deal more than Mrs. Marchdale did, when she heard from him that he intended to resign all thoughts of Magdalene.

"Give her up, Mr. Wendell!—give her up! Your love has soon cooled, sir!" she said scornfully.

"You are quite mistaken, Mrs. Marchdale," was the reply, given very sorrowfully. "My love has not cooled at all. I would give my life to

save Magdalene from this grief—she was never dearer to me than now. But a man has other things to think of than his love.”

“Of course he has!” was the reply, with still greater scorn in the speaker’s voice and eyes. “Such things as position, family connections, and worldly repute; and I don’t know any class of men that think more of them than gentlemen of your cloth, Mr. Wendell. One can’t expect you to differ from the traditions of your class.”

“You are misjudging me very much, Mrs. Marchdale,” replied the Curate, still in the same quiet mournful tone; “but I suppose I must expect to be misjudged. I care nothing for the things you speak of, but I do care for anything that might possibly diminish my usefulness as a minister of Christ, or which might cast a slur upon the Church of which I am a member; and I ask you, is Martha Thornleigh a fit person for a clergyman’s mother-in-law? Will not the knowledge that so near a connection of my wife’s has always led, and in all likelihood will continue to lead

a disreputable life, lower my influence as a priest ? Might the physician not be told to purify his own household before he meddled with those of others ? Will it not always be a ready retort in the mouths of the sinners and drunkards I am bound to reprove, that I had better begin at home ? Besides, the wife of a priest should have no such stain upon her as must necessarily rest upon the daughter of Martha Thornleigh—she should be not only pure herself, but with connections, however poor and humble, of unblemished character. For God's sake, don't think it has cost me nothing to come to this determination ! I think in all my life I never knew what suffering was before !”

He paced nervously up and down the room with his hands behind his back, the fingers tightly interlaced. Mrs. Marchdale looked keenly at him. He *had* suffered—there could be no question of it. His face was thin, worn and weary-looking, with lines around the mouth that she had never observed there before. She spoke more gently—

“I don't question your having suffered, Mr.

Wendell, but I do think that you needlessly magnify the harm Martha's delinquencies might cause you. You need not continue Curate at Elmsley. Marry, and settle elsewhere."

Philip Wendell shook his head.

"One is never safe with such a woman as Martha Thornleigh for a connection; and after all, her daughter is her daughter, and at any time might be called on to render duties to her mother which would cause the relationship to become known. Besides, you don't look at the thing as I do. Magdalene, with all her beauty and loveableness, is tainted by such a parentage; and I dare not, as a priest, take as my wife one who is so. It seems to me it would be an insult to my Church. I do not speak here of my individual feelings. I have no pride of ancestry or family to influence me in this matter. We Wendells have been gentlemen for the last three hundred years, and married in our own position; but when I proposed for Magdalene, I was quite content with Mr. Thornleigh's assertion that her father was an

honest man, and her mother long since dead. How could I think that the wretched outcast your boys picked up at the roadside, had anything in common with my Magdalene; and how dare I, knowing it—how dare I, as a priest, make the child of such a one my wife?"

Mrs. Marchdale began to feel a little pity for him. Still, the trouble seemed to her a very cure-able one.

"Then don't be a priest," she said; "there are plenty of openings for a man of your abilities, Mr. Wendell."

"Impossible!—impossible!—I have put my hand to the plough, and I may not take it back. I counted the cost before I began to build my tower, and if I find it comes to more than I had thought, it is too late to help it now." He walked hurriedly up and down the room, while the big drops stood on his forehead. "Don't tempt me!—for God's sake don't tempt me thus! Haven't I thought about it all!—tried to see my way to what you advise, if I could do it with a clear con-

science; and I dare not—I dare not, even for Magdalene, perjure my soul, and leave the work undone my Master has given me to do! I must be true to Him—true to my calling, at any cost of suffering to myself—or her.”

“You are not true to Him, sir!” broke in Mrs. Marchdale, angrily. She was only a woman, and a very impulsive one, and all her sympathies were on the side of Magdalene. “You are not true to Him if you break a girl’s heart, thinking to do Him service. You were a man before you were a priest, and you are false to your manhood now in flinging Magdalene from you for no fault of hers. Can you serve the Lord in no other manner but in the Church? The best work in the world is by no means always done by those who stand before the altar. No! I don’t speak as a sectarian—I only remember that I am a woman, and I tell you it will be cruel and false to break your plight with Magdalene; and no blessing will come upon such cruelty and falsehood! No good work will be performed by such an unworthy hand; and He

for whom you make such a needless sacrifice will scorn to 'accept it !'

"You are very hard upon me," murmured Philip; "I had hoped you would have taken a juster view of the motives which impel me to this step—that you would at least have given me credit for their being neither selfish nor unworthy ones."

"I give you credit for deceiving yourself very much in this matter, and for being as thoroughly miserable about it as you deserve to be; and I think that the sorrow you are inflicting upon yourself and Magdalene is sorrow of the worst kind, being a perfectly needless, self-imposed torment, which never does any good to any one. There are no troubles so hard to bear as those of our own creating; and you have most certainly created this."

Philip Wendell sat down by the table, and lowered his head upon his hands.

"I was in hopes," he said softly, "that you would have spared me the pain of breaking this to Magdalene."

"You deserve to be spared pain!" thought Mrs. Marchdale, vindictively; but she only said, "You are the fittest person to communicate your own decision; and you will pardon me, but—"

The door opened, and Magdalene herself entered.

"You poor lamb!" thought Mrs. Marchdale; "you've just come in the very nick of time to be sacrificed!"

She went out of the room, considering the two would be best by themselves, leaving Philip Wendell to go through his task as best he might.

The conversation between Mrs. Marchdale and him had taken place in the drawing-room, which was close to the little studio of which I have before spoken. It was to it she retreated, and sat down, looking—as she was—very thoroughly angry; at last her excitement found vent in a hearty cry, after which she felt much more collected, and better able to take a calm view of matters. So she began thinking over Magdalene's future, and the best way to help her bear up under the heart-

break that was even now being inflicted on her. Presently she heard a low, wailing cry issue from the drawing-room.

“Ah! my darling, he’s driving the sword home now! A priest, indeed! Pity he hadn’t lived in the old Jewish times! He would have known how to use the sacrificial knife with a firm hand!”

She sat down, listening for any further sign of grief, but though now and then she heard Philip Wendell’s voice rising in tones of passionate entreaty or anguish, she could distinguish no response from Magdalene. After a while the drawing-room door opened, and he came out; she went on to the landing, and looked at him. It was a pale face, with quivering lips, and eyes full of tears, that met her—a face that made her feel something like pity for him at last, spite of all the trouble he had brought on Magdalene.

“Go to her,” he whispered—“go to her, truest, kindest, best of friends; she wants you now, and may God help us both!”

Then he was gone, and Magdalene found herself weeping on the bosom and encircled in the arms of the friend who had become to her as a mother.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAGDALENE'S grief did not kill her—nay, more, she bore it very bravely, fighting against, and keeping it under with a set, steadfast purpose, that showed her endowed with no small strength of will.

“She is a brave, good girl,” said Mr. Marchdale to his wife, “and some day she’ll forget that fellow, and make a better man happy.”

“No, she won’t, Stephen,” replied his wife, rather crossly—she scarcely liked any one to find fault with the Curate but herself; “she’ll never forget Philip Wendell—and if she did, I don’t think she would easily meet with a better. He is a good man—a very good one—but he has had the great unhappiness to make a terrible mistake,

which he may never find out, or only when too late."

Mrs. Marchdale's anger had by this time greatly subsided, and she was quite ready to own that Philip was as much to be pitied as blamed, though her sympathy with Magdalene was as warm as ever. Whatever might have passed in the interview between the latter and her lover, she said very little respecting it, and never once spoke in blame of him; and Mrs. Marchdale knew better than to do so in her hearing. I am not sure whether Magdalene did not hold her lover all the dearer for the wound he had inflicted on her. There was one thing she was very sure of, and that was that he suffered to the full himself as keenly as she did. So even in the height of her grief she looked upon him as a martyr, who, if he had pressed a crown of thorns upon her brow, wore one like it on his own. For the Church, to which Philip had sacrificed himself and her, Magdalene possessed no deeper reverential feeling than most girls of her age. Her

lover's creed would have been hers, I am inclined to think, let it have been what it might. She might have begun by professing a vast amount of self-reliance in such matters; she would have infallibly ended with thinking her lover's thoughts, and believing his beliefs. And as Philip had chosen to immolate his and her dearest hopes and affections to this Church, Magdalene held him right in so doing, and venerated what Mrs. Marchdale mentally termed an ecclesiastical Juggernaut accordingly.

But the girl—let her keep her sorrow to herself as she might, and bear it as bravely as she would—with all her pride and reticence, suffered fearfully. For with all her heart and soul she had loved Philip Wendell, and it was not so easy to teach both heart and soul to forget the love and the passionate tenderness they had so freely lavished on him. For a time the very consciousness that her lover had called upon her to share with him a great self-sacrifice, sustained her in her trial. But after a while, though the first

agony of her grief had subsided, there came the dull dead reaction, and the life that was to have been shared with him, and which had been pictured in such glowing colours, appeared cold, and dull, and tame ; and as the heavy hours flew by, with no sound of Philip's step or voice to cheer and lighten them, she could have cried with Mariana, "My life is weary—weary ! Would God that I were dead !"

Oh ! so weary this life !—so very weary !—and but a little time ago how beautiful and glowing it had seemed !

Mrs. Marchdale was the kindest and the most forbearing friend that ever a young heart with such a trouble, knew ; and Clarice was very loving and gentle, and Mr. Marchdale tender as a father to her, and all the surroundings of the home in which she now dwelt were widely different, in their refinement and luxurious comfort, to anything she had known while dwelling either with Miss Grandison, or at the house in the tile-yard. But neither Clarice, nor her mother or father, was

Philip; and all the many elegancies around, which would once have so delighted her, began to pall upon her now.

"That girl's not looking well," observed Mr. Marchdale. "Suppose you take her up to town, Kate, to Dr. Maurice—or what do you think of horse exercise for her?"

"I'm sure she don't want the doctor," was the reply; "and I don't think riding on horseback would quite meet her case. She must get away from here, and have some work found for her. She wants an object in life—something to strive and struggle for."

"Take her to Hastings," said Mr. Marchdale. "Suppose we all go. It can't be very pleasant for her to be meeting that fellow every now and then; but as to striving and struggling, my dear Kitty, do you think every woman is as pugnacious as yourself? A quiet home like this, where she is welcome to stay for ever, is the best place for a girl."

"Not altogether. Trouble has found her out

even in this sheltered little nook of ours. My dear Ste, Magdalene is quite a different creature to our quiet placid Clarie. *She* will never be satisfied to go on living here, feeling herself a dependant upon us; and the routine that fills up the one girl's life so happily, is quite insufficient for the other. Now, I will tell you, Ste, what I have been thinking would be the best possible thing for Magdalene. If her amiable mamma will do anything towards it, well and good; if not, I am afraid, sir, the pecuniary part of the affair will fall to your share."

And therewith Mrs. Marchdale unfolded to her husband the schemes she had been mentally propounding for Magdalene's benefit. He did not altogether disapprove of them, and volunteered himself to call on Mrs. John Thornleigh, and see if she would give her concurrence and assistance in them.

But that lady was very decided in her refusal.

"Make her girl an artist!—what next, she

should like to know? Wasn't there plenty for them both, if she'd only come home and live with her mother, as a good daughter should? No! she'd have nothing to do with anything of the kind. There was a home for Magdalene whenever she liked to come to it, and not a penny should she have from her as long as she chose to stop away."

But the house in the tile-ground was no longer a fit home for any girl. Martha had forgotten all her good resolutions as to respectability, and had returned to her old habits, drinking freely, and scandalizing the village by her outrageous conduct in other ways. Being, as she said herself, of a sociable turn, and finding her society by no means courted by those whom she now considered her equals, she made friends where she could, and the former labourers in the tile-yard sometimes found themselves and their wives invited to share in the hospitalities of its present mistress. She was very generous to Mrs. Hill, calling at the beershop occasionally, and partaking of tea, and now and

then bestowing articles of finery upon the girls; while she would feelingly lament to their mother the ingratitude of her own child, who had gone and taken up with strangers, as if she hadn't one of the best of mothers, who'd be only too glad to have her!

However, she was always civil to Mrs. Marchdale when they met, confining herself to such speeches as—

“When my girl's tired of you, tell her not to forget she's a home of her own to come to;” or, “I think it would be only fair, as you will have my girl all to yourself, that I should have your boy.”

And Mrs. Marchdale sometimes sent him to her.

“If anybody can do that wretched creature good,” she said to her husband when he remonstrated, “it will be Roley. If there's anything womanly left in her, he'll find it out. And she can't hurt him, Ste, so let the child go.”

And the child went, and was feasted and petted

in a style that made Master Roley quite a warm partizan of Martha's. He had the finest cricket-bat and ball in the school, which she presented him with, and tops, and bows and arrows in abundance. She would have given him a watch, but when Roley announced her liberal intentions at home, he was charged to say that his father would not allow him to accept it ; and the same prohibition was extended to gifts of money, of which Roley otherwise would have had a great deal more than was good for him.

To Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Thornleigh Martha was the sorest trouble they had known since their residence in Elmsley ; for she would not forget the relationship, but was constantly sending messages round to the Grange, couched in the most familiar terms, sometimes to borrow articles which were never returned (Mrs. Joseph stood far too much in awe of her terrible sister-in-law to dream of refusing them), or accompanying little presents, not always of the most refined nature. If she met Mrs. Joseph and her daughters, she would recog-

nize them with a cordiality that was dreadful to endure—once walking down the whole length of Elmsley in company with them, and loudly requesting them to come in the next day to tea. She had not forgotten Miss Darnell and the tracts, and her own intimation that she might possibly return the call that young lady had made on her at the almshouses, for she dropped in one morning at the Rectory, and offered her services as tract-distributor. Ever after that she made a point of greeting the whole family whenever she met them, though her most obtrusive attentions were lavished on the Rector, whom she was perpetually requesting to drop in in a friendly way, and horrifying out of his propriety by asking him when he intended to do so, and take something hot.

If her affectionate relatives, and the Rector's family, could only have indicted her for a nuisance, they would most cordially have united together to do so; but outrageous as many of her proceedings were, there was nothing, as Mrs. Darnell mournfully declared, even positively actionable in them,

and there seemed nothing for it but to submit, with what patience they might, to the inflictions of her unseemly conduct.

Mrs. Waybrooke amused herself, as an observer of human nature, by watching Martha's vagaries in her new position, duly chronicling them for the edification of her daughters. She particularly enjoyed her attacks upon Mr. Darnell—Mr. Darnell, with whom she herself never ventured to take a liberty, being asked to drop in and hob-nob with Martha Thornleigh, in pine-apple rum or best Geneva! She was, however, very devoutly thankful that she had escaped the honour of a connection with this formidable personage. Even Artie's infatuation for Clarice Marchdale was better, after all, than a marriage with Magdalene would have been under existing circumstances. But the whole credit or discredit of Martha's having become a fixture in the parish, was given, by the general voice of Elmsley gentility, to Mrs. Marchdale. If only those boys of hers had left that wretched creature by the road-side! It seemed rather un-

Christian to say it, but would it not, after all, have been better to have left her there? Or, at any rate, why did Mrs. Marchdale induce Captain Osborne to place her in one of the almshouses? If she had only done as any one else would, and let her be sent to the workhouse, she would, in due time, have been forwarded to her parish, and nobody in Elmsley would ever have heard any more about her.

There were sad scandals too, spread about Mrs. John's household. Susan had departed within a month of Mr. Thornleigh's death, and was now second housemaid at the Manor House, Mrs. Marchdale's remonstrances and Magdalene's persuasions having done a great deal more than Miss Becky's lectures had ever effected in the way of lessening her crinoline, and improving her general neatness.

Charlotte had married; she had intended to manage matters more prudently than Susan had done, and therefore delayed giving warning till she had secured her mourning for her late master;

but Mrs. John was highly indignant at being so tricked, and declaring that black was no wear for a bride, consigned it all to the kitchen fire. Then riot held its reign in the domestic regions of the house in the tile-ground, where erst Miss Becky had enforced such prim decorous order. The girls from the village, who now succeeded Charlotte and Susan, were generally allowed to enjoy themselves after their own fashion, as their mistress did after hers. So they had their sweethearts to snug little suppers, and scandalized the neighbourhood by the way in which they dressed, their flaunting behaviour, the late hours they kept, and the beer-shops they were seen in.

Elmsley girls were anything but the innocent village maidens simple-minded poets, who know very little of English rural life, are fond of picturing; but once they became members of Mrs. John's establishment, they appeared to graduate, as it were, in effrontery, and to be eligible for honours, had such been awarded, for sheer unblushing vice and shamelessness. But now and then their mis-

tress appeared impressed with a sense of her responsibilities, and took it upon her to call her damsels to account for their misdoings. Woe to them if, when these moods were on her, she caught any unlucky wight in the kitchen at forbidden hours ! or detected food being surreptitiously conveyed out of the house. She would inflict personal chastisement with an unsparing hand, and almost hurl the interloper out of the house ; or the joint that was to have served as a supper to Betty's most intimate friends would be brandished about the unlucky girl's ears, till, battered and greasy, she was fain to cry for mercy, or to rush out of the house till her mistress's righteous indignation had subsided.

Miss Becky had had an encounter with her sister-in-law ; only one, but it was quite sufficient to deter her from ever wishing for another. On hearing of Mrs. John's positive refusal to do anything for her daughter, unless she placed herself under her mother's gentle auspices, she considered it, as she expressed it, her duty to call, and let the

unhappy creature know what was incumbent on her in her new position.

"You'd better let her alone, Beck," advised Mr. Joseph. "You'll get no good by meddling with her."

But Miss Becky was firm in her virtuous resolutions, and accordingly sallied forth to call on her relative.

"Keeps the house like a pig-stye," was her first thought, as she knocked at the front door, and surveyed the steps, which looked as if they had not been hearthstoned since they were last done by her orders. "Mercy on me! there's not a blind straight, and as to the windows, I don't believe they've been cleaned for a month!"

The slatternly, bold-looking girl, with her hair trailing from beneath her dirty cap, who opened the door, showed Miss Becky into the parlour—that parlour whose painful primness and elaborate neatness had so disgusted Magdalene. She would have found there were worse things in the world than over-cleanliness, could she have seen it now.

The polished old-fashioned dining-table was marked with unmistakable signs of pewter pots and beer; in the fender were a couple of broken pipes; the hearth was half-full of ashes, and Miss Becky longed to write "slut." with her finger upon the dust that lay thick upon the sideboard and chairs. There was a furious fire in the grate, "enough," as Miss Becky said, "to roast an ^{ox}—wasting good ^{if. well} coals for nothing, this mild day;" the furniture was all disarranged, and a shawl and a dirty widow's cap were flung upon the sofa.

"A nice home for that girl to come to," thought Magdalene's aunt. "A likely story, after all the pains I took with her, for that woman to have her now! But, oh! dear—oh! dear! the pride I took in this place, and to think what it's come to now! It shows the folly of setting one's heart too much on earthly things; and I always did set mine upon having the tidiest place in Elmsley."

The door opened, and Mrs. John entered, looking very cross, with dress awry, and hair roughly put back under her cap, which was almost as dirty

as the one on the sofa. She had just been paying one of her occasional visits to the kitchen, and having found plenty to irritate her there, had relieved her excited feelings by boxing one girl's ears, and flinging a whole armful of towels at the other; but even these salutary diversions had not sufficiently toned her mind down to a desirable mood in which to meet a visitor.

"Good morning, ma'am; you've been a long time coming to see me," she said, seating herself by the fire, and rousing it to a still fiercer blaze. "Look at those hussies now!—I don't believe they've touched the room this morning! That comes, you see, Miss Thornleigh, of being too easy with your servants. I'm too mild with mine by half, and they impose upon me shameful! They should have you, now, to deal with. I warrant they'd find the difference!"

"I expect they would," replied Miss Becky, glancing round at the disarray of the apartment. "But I didn't come to talk about that, Mrs. John, but to ask you if it's really true you intend to do

nothing for your daughter—as good a girl (though I say it, that had the training of her for near a twelvemonth) as ever breathed. I think, considering how well you've been left by my poor brother, you've no need to let his only child be depending upon strangers."

"Who says I let her?" replied Martha, crossly. "Haven't I said all along that here's a home for her?—as good a home as a girl need have. Who wants her to go living with the Marchdales? Why can't she come here, and look after those hussies of girls, who plague me out of my senses? If you'll believe me, Miss Thornleigh, I caught a party of five of their friends at breakfast in the kitchen this morning! No, let her come here and stop till she marries, and she'll be a comfort to her mother, as she ought to be, and learn how to keep a house in order against she has one of her own."

"It's not quite so sure that she will be married," said Miss Becky.

"How's that?" asked Mrs. John, sharply. "I suppose I'm not genteel enough to be mother-in-

law to a parson; and he's like the rest of them, thinks a deal more of this world than he does of the next. I'd have done handsomely, too, by the girl if he'd taken her—that is, if she'd just come to me for a bit, as if I was her mother; but she's John Thornleigh's own dear child—he need never have doubted that—and knows how to hate as well as ever her father did before her.”

She looked into the fire, with a cold, hard bitterness in her face, and, after a moment or two, turned to Miss Becky.

“Is that all you've got to say, ma'am, or will you stop and take some breakfast? I haven't had mine yet—if you'll keep me company. *No!* don't begin again about the girl—I stick to what I say. Here's a home for her if she likes to come to it. When she marries, whether it's the parson or anybody else, I'll do as well for her, or better, than her father would if he'd been living; but not a penny shall she have as long as she stays away. There! now, if you've had your breakfast, I want mine; and here it comes at last.”

She poured herself out some tea, and drank it; while Miss Becky, declining any refreshment, said—

“Before you think of taking a well-brought-up girl under your care, ma’am, you should do as I did—make up your mind to do your duty by her, and let her have a decent home to live in, with respectable servants to wait upon her. You couldn’t expect any one that’s been used to things as I kept them, to put up with such a place as this; and as to those sluts you’ve got for maids, everyone in Elmsley knows the less said about them the better. Your house wants setting to rights in more ways than one, before it’s fit for a niece of mine to come to.”

Miss Becky was plain-spoken, and prided herself upon it, but Martha was plainer spoken still. She rang the bell with such a peal, that it brought both the serving-maids at once, when she thus addressed them—

“You’ll show Miss Thornleigh the door. Open it this once for her, shut her out, and never

let her in the house again. Mind, if you do, I'll send you both packing. Now, ma'am, you've had your say, and I've had mine. You were mistress of this house quite long enough—it's mine now, and I'll thank no one to interfere with me. So we'll just say good morning, and part quite civilly, and the less we see of one another the better."

There was nothing for it but for Miss Becky to retreat as gracefully as she could under such unfavourable circumstances.

She communicated the result of the interview to Mrs. Marchdale, and, with that hard inflexible sense of duty that, however ungraciously displayed, had something, after all, of sterling good in it, offered to take charge of Magdalene herself, as soon as she had settled down in the cottage, which she had already taken.

"And I've no doubt she'll do very well, though things are broken off with Mr. Wendell, for I've always noticed, if a girl's properly looked after, she's safe to get a husband. My brother wouldn't

have had his two girls on his hands at this time of day if I'd had my way with them."

But Mrs. Marchdale was not quite sure that a home with Miss Becky would be altogether conducive to Magdalene's happiness, and, putting the proposal aside as civilly as she could, resolved to carry out those plans for Magdalene's future which she had unfolded to her husband, and trust to his liberality for the means of doing so.

"As you can't make her a happy woman, Kitty, you're going to try and make her a famous one," he said.

"And the happiness will come, Ste, as it always does, when least looked for."

CHAPTER IX.

IN one of the semi-fashionable localities in the neighbourhood of Oxford Street, where abound artists, and men whose avocations lead them to desire a quiet residence, and yet one not too far from the great centres of London life, Mr. Charles Harley had for the last twenty years resided. He was a painter of some repute, drawing-master to the large public school in which Cliffe and Roley were pupils, and twice a week received students at his own house. Indeed, his fame was higher as a tutor than as an artist, as Mrs. Marchdale well knew, when she arranged that Magdalene should become a resident with him and his wife. That lady had been a school-fellow of her own ; only, being a poor professional man's daughter, instead of a rich manufacturer's,

and not having her friend's gift of beauty wherewith to bring a wealthy husband to her feet, she had, on the completion of her education, become a governess, and laboured in this vocation with more or less success, till she was eight-and-thirty, when Mr. Harley fell in love with her, after a sober, middle-aged fashion of his own, and in due time proposed. He was ten or twelve years her senior, a widower, with two grown-up sons, and for some time past, having found his house in Holles Street rather difficult to keep in the state he had been accustomed to see it in when under feminine rule, had been looking out for a sensible, well-educated woman, who would make him a good wife, and keep his house and servant in order for him; and Miss Mayne appeared, as far as he could judge, to possess the necessary qualifications. The lady was a little flattered by the offer, coming, as it did, at a time when she had long since given up all idea of matrimony; and Mrs. Marchdale and she having always been close friends and correspondents, it was to her old

schoolfellow, then residing at Clapham, Miss Mayne hastened to communicate the offer she had received, and to ask her advice thereupon. Mrs. Marchdale was almost as much surprised as her friend, but took the matter much more coolly. She had had seventeen years' experience of matrimony, and it was by no means such a formidable affair to her as it was to Ellen Mayne. It was certainly odd that at that time of day any one should have singled the latter out as the object of a tender passion; still, as some one had been found capable of doing so, the proper thing was to give his proposal a fair consideration. She ascertained that her friend was fancy free, and then judiciously placed the matter before her in such a rational light as induced Miss Mayne to arrive at the conclusion, that to marry Mr. Harley was the best thing she could possibly do.

It was not very long before she found herself installed in Holles Street, the mistress of one of the most comfortable and best furnished houses in it. She filled her new position admirably, made the

best possible step-mother to George and James Harley, humoured her husband's little fancies—he had not many—believed implicitly in him as a painter, and had only one pet little grievance, and that was the want of discrimination the Royal Academy evinced in not having long since made her husband an R.A.

Fortunately for the domestic comfort of the Harleys, though they had now been married above three years, they were still unblessed with children. Mrs. Harley had no wish for such troublesome blessings, and her husband was quite satisfied with the two he already possessed. The life at 98 Holles Street flowed on very pleasantly and evenly, rippled by as few cares and anxieties as it well could be. Mr. Harley worked at his pictures, and looked after his pupils, and Mrs. Harley attended to her domestic duties, and paid and received morning calls, and shared in little parties, and kept a pleasant, cheerful home for her stepsons, and got on as well with her husband as if he and she had begun to climb the hill together from

the very foot, instead of waiting till they were half way up it before they joined paths together.

Mrs. Marchdale was very well pleased when she had completed the necessary arrangements for Magdalene's becoming a member of the Holles Street household. Mrs. Harley had once or twice expressed a wish to her to meet with a suitable inmate as boarder, and it was no difficult matter to induce Mr. Harley and her to receive one so well recommended by the old friend of both. Mrs. Marchdale had, in her early married life, been a pupil, and a favourite one, of the painter's, and he was very ready to give Magdalene every assistance in his power. Besides the opportunity of working under his direction, she was to attend the School of Art at Kensington, and devote one day a week to visiting and shopping with Mrs. Harley. As that lady's principal reason for desiring an inmate was the wish for feminine companionship, it seemed hardly fair not to consider her a little while disposing of Magdalene's time. Neither had

Mrs. Marchdale any wish that Magdalene should be *all* artist.

On the whole, Magdalene might have been very happy at the Harleys', if only she could have forgotten, or had never known, Philip Wendell. Even as it was, she found the shadow of her grief lessening, as daily she became more and more aware that life was much too rich and full a thing for one sorrow, however great, to obscure it wholly. She was able to devote herself more than ever to her art, and made such progress in it that Mr. Harley was intensely grateful to Mrs. Marchdale for having brought him a pupil of such promise.

So the spring ripened into summer, and the movement and gaiety of the season were all round and about the quiet house in Holles Street, stirring even the peaceful tenor of the lives of its inhabitants with the excitements of exhibitions, and visits to the Academy, and flower-shows, and carriages rattling to the door with fashionable pupils for Mr. Harley, and now and then with fashionable

purchasers of his pictures ; and Magdalene began to feel more than ever that life was a bright and pleasant thing, and youth a very precious one, and that the world had other prizes besides love to offer. Still, even feeling this, and thankful for all the happiness she yet possessed, and for the new powers daily developing and strengthening, she was conscious that Philip Wendell was as dear as when on that bright summer day they sat and looked at the swans upon the water. Her love was an integral part of her life, and she knew that it would last as long as life itself ; but nevertheless it was not enough to fill that life, as she had once thought it must and would.

She was to spend the autumn with the Marchdales ; but before the time came round for this holiday, which was to be a veritable one, with nutting, blackberrying, and pic-nicking, and everything that might send her back fresh and strong to her work, some of the folks she had left behind in Elmsley had had their troubles too, and, more or less, the blame of them, as the blame of most

things did that went amiss there, fell upon Mrs. Marchdale.

Artie Waybrooke had gone to the bad, folks said ; and those who knew how constant, during the preceding summer, his visits had been to the Manor House, were inclined to credit its mistress with having suffered him to waste his time there upon a girl who, she knew from the first, would never care for him. As to Clarice, she was called a flirt, who had led him on, a jilt, who had cast him off—placid gentle Clarice, who was as innocent of flirting or jilting as if she had been still in the nursery with her doll.

Mrs. Waybrooke had been in great fear lest Clarice should become her daughter-in-law ; she would have been thankful now could she have seen a prospect of the fair still beauty's being so. For Artie had taken to courses more disgraceful even than Dissent, and all the pathetic remonstrances his mother wrote, when tidings of his derelictions reached her ears, were powerless to turn him from the error of his ways. Not that those

ways were so very evil after all; and had Artie not been studying for the Church, his outbreaks might have been passed over as a boy's idle freaks, which he would weary of before long. But the sage friends who had been asked by Mrs. Waybrooke to keep an eye on her young hopeful could make no allowances for one in Artie's position; and though they were not cruel enough or candid enough to say all they thought to his mother, she could gather quite sufficient from their carefully worded epistles to lead her to fancy things were very bad indeed. And when she wrote to Artie, advising him to take heed to his steps, he either answered not at all, or with short defiant letters that were even worse than silence.

She had had little comfort with him. He had been as disagreeable and unpleasant as before he left home—sullen, wayward, and irritable; altogether unlike the bright, good-tempered Artie who, as the servants said, used to make the house alive again whenever he came to it. And all that she had heard of him since was sorely trying;

but she was in hopes that the Vacation, which would bring him to her again, might do something towards weaning him from the evil habits and loose associates she had heard of, and that her boy, after all, might be her very own again. She would make his holidays such very happy ones; he should have his favourite sister asked to meet him, and she would get up all sorts of little gaieties, and, if it would give him any pleasure, include the Marchdales in them. Nay, more, she would contrive to let him know, and convey gently to them, that an alliance between the two houses would be looked upon by her in a favourable light. After all, it would be better for Artie to give up the Church altogether than to do as he was doing, breaking her heart and destroying his prospects in every way. There were other openings for him, and Mr. Marchdale, who really, if he did go to Chapel, was a gentleman and a thorough man of business, could do so much to promote the interests of his future son-in-law. Yes, the Vacation would doubtless do wonders, so she

would kill the fatted calf for her prodigal, and welcome him home with jubilations and rejoicings.

Ah! poor mother, it was a terrible trial to her when Artie cut short her dreams and plannings for his welcome, by never coming home to receive it. She had a letter from him on the very day when she expected him. It came just as she had herself given the finishing touches to the apartment which was always designated his—those last loving touches that women are so fond of bestowing on the room of any longed-for guest. His favourite dinner was at the fire; she had the ribbons whose colour pleased him best in her cap; the drawing-room wore a gala air, with its fresh flowers and dainty arrangements, and even the housemaid had assumed her best dress to do all honour to Master Artie, when this cruel letter came to tell the mother her boy had fled far away from her, and home, and friends. The letter gave no clue as to whither he had gone, but she felt it must be far from the safe and pleasant anchorage

where she had hoped his bark would rest awhile—drifted away on the far waters, where her love would fail to reach, and be powerless to help him.

“Oh! Mary, he’s not coming after all!” she cried to the servant who had handed her the letter, and then sank down, crying woefully, by the bedside where she had thought her boy would sleep that night.

Artie’s letter told her little. It was full of passionate self-reproaches, and vague repinings at his ill-fate and his evil star; vague hints that he dared not stay to face the worst, which his mother would know but too soon; and incoherent prayers to be pardoned and forgotten—the cruel mockery of it!—to the mother who sat breaking her heart for her missing boy, to be told by that boy to forget him! It was a selfish, thoughtless, wicked letter, and yet Artie had not meant it so. He had been very reckless since his rejection by Clarice, and had done some very foolish things, that otherwise he would never have thought of. He had

been very careless as to his money; had incurred many needless expenses; and played with those who knew better how to handle the cards than he did; and having narrowly escaped being plucked at his examination, had left College in debt to the full amount of a year's allowance.

All these facts came afterwards to Mrs. Waybrooke's knowledge; now all she knew was that by his own confession her boy had been very weak and wicked, and had rushed away to hide himself from all who knew him, leaving her to bear by herself the shame and the grief that he had brought on her. It was a miserable ending to all her hopes of what this vacation was to bring, and the poor lady just now felt very friendless. She did not expect her daughter for another week, and she had no brother or near relation within a hundred miles to whom she could look for help in this great trouble. As to Mr. Darnell, who, in right of his position as Rector, might have seemed the fittest person she could have recourse to; even in all her grief she could not help saying pettishly,

when she thought of him, "apart from his sermons, he's no more brains than a broomstick," and it would be very hard for her, who had so exulted in the well-mating of her daughters, and the fair promise of her son, to let Mrs. Darnell learn how she was crushed and humbled. Mr. Joseph Thornleigh, though not her regular professional adviser, had been often consulted by her upon many points of business not strictly legal. She had been very useful to the family at the Grange on their first entrance into Elmsley society; and Mr. Joseph had been glad to secure something like an intimate footing in a house which, quiet as it was, ranked in social status next to the Rectory, by giving her the benefit of his counsel as a friend. But she could not go to him now, for he was away from the neighbourhood, touring it with his wife and daughters on the Continent. So what could she do in this desolate plight but sit down and cry afresh over her own helplessness and Artie's cruelty. Captain Osborne, too, was away, or she might have asked him for advice;

and in her bitter sorrow I think she would have been inclined to go to Mr. Marchdale with her burden, sure that in him she would have a father and a kind-hearted man to appeal to, only that, if possible, this escapade of Artie's must be concealed from the knowledge of every one at the Manor House, for the boy's only chance of salvation seemed to rest upon his love being at last successful, and she feared the effect a knowledge of his flight might have upon the parents of Clarice.

"For they're sure to be straight-laced, and won't make any allowances for him—not even though their own daughter has been at the root of all the mischief, and turned the poor fellow's head, till the only hope for him or for me rests upon the chance of that girl's caring for him."

It was very bitter—very bitter, to have to acknowledge it, but not the less it was so. Clarice Marchdale might be the arbitress of her son's fate. It might rest with her whether he would go headlong to ruin, or return and lead a reputable life in usefulness and honour.

"Oh! dear, if those Marchdales had never come to Elmsley!" moaned Artie's mother, and then took up her boy's letter, and read the blotted scrawl afresh. Then she wrote to her friends at Oxford, to ascertain what tidings they could give her of her boy—whether they knew anything of his destination, and how he had been spending his time lately. She next despatched a few lines to the daughter whom she had asked to meet Artie, entreating her and her husband to come at once; and then she countermanded the dinner, saying, with as much composure as she could command—

"Mr. Arthur will not be home for a few days, and, after expecting him, I don't care to dine alone; so, Mary, bring me a cup of tea in my own room."

And she drank her tea—that never-failing tea to which we women fly in all our troubles—heartaches, and headaches, illness of mind and illness of body—with the tears which she had kept down before the servants, flowing all the time in the stillness of the room where she had given Artie birth; and

watched over him in his childish ailments, and then she thought of the babe she had clasped in her arms with a joy a mother only knows when she holds her first-born son ; thought, too, of the fond, loving, handsome boy, whose eyes had brightened at her voice, and to whom once it would have seemed impossible that he could ever know a dearer than his mother, and yet who now had torn himself away from her and home, and trampled her hopes into the dust, and treated her love as if it were of no account, because the fair face of a girl he had scarcely known a year had turned away from him.

Hers was a harder trial than Magdalene's after all. We women have sharper griefs to bear than the love troubles of our early youth. Poets are fond of picturing a mother's joy, but what man ever yet had words given him to tell of that infinity of anguish which mothers alone are called on to endure.

Artie was living still—healthy and well, for aught she knew, and might in a few days return ;

but he would never be what he had been again. All the years to come would fail to teach her to forget that he had held her love as naught, compared to that other love which had been denied him ; he was her son still—might possibly yet be her stay and pride—but never, never, her own—own—*own* boy again !”

CHAPTER X.

MR. JOSEPH THORNLEIGH and his family were away on the Continent. It was a charming season for touring, people said, and the route they had marked out was a very delightful one; through Antwerp, Brussels, up the Rhine, and so on to Switzerland. What could be pleasanter? Mrs. Thornleigh and her daughters were congratulated before their departure by their friends, and as this tour was one to which the ladies had long looked forward, they were inclined to think themselves highly favoured when the master of the house acquainted them with his intention of carrying out his promise respecting it at last. It is doubtful whether he would not have still further postponed the doing so, had it not been that by this time his sister-in-law had annoyed

and worried him almost into a nervous fever. He hated the very sight or name of his late brother's wife, and he was for ever seeing or hearing of her. It would cost something to take his family abroad, but it was worth a good deal to get quit for a time of Mrs. John. Besides, a tour like this, with its attendant sight-seeing and lion hunting, would tend to restore the lustre to the Thornleigh gentility, which had suffered not a little since Martha had proved her title to the name.

For it had been a terrible blow to all the Thornleighs to be obliged to some extent to recognize Martha as a member of the family. She would persist in proclaiming the relationship, and make it patent to all the little Elmsley world, and to have a good position in this infinitesimal microcosm was the one great social prize they had been struggling for for years. This visit to the Continent might do a great deal to enable them to hold their heads up against the adverse tide of unfriendly sneers and disparaging remarks, which Mrs. John had laid them open to. Mr. Horace Thornleigh was not

to accompany his family, his presence being considered indispensable at the office, and he resigned himself to the privation of the pleasure with an excellent grace—informing his sisters, in confidence, “that he wished them and the old lady well through it.”

Mrs. Joseph had meekly resigned herself to the prospect of travelling; seeing foreign sights, and visiting foreign lands, was rather a formidable undertaking to an elderly lady, the one journey of whose life had till now been that which she performed at her wedding, when her husband brought her from Somersetshire to London; but as she was now told by him and her daughters that she must travel, she prepared to obey their behests. But even her placid nature rebelled when Mr. Joseph interfered with the luggage, limiting it to the smallest possible amount, insisting upon the ladies travelling in hats, as more useful and better able to stand the weather than other head-gear, and forbidding anything in the shape of a bonnet being either carried with them, or purchased *en route*.

It would have been a gratifying sight to those husbands and fathers, who groan under the infliction of portmanteaus, trunks, and packages innumerable, could they have seen the one small box and carpet-bag into which Mr. Joseph Thornleigh had compelled his womenkind to stow all their requirements in the way of wardrobe.

“You won’t meet anybody you know, so there’s no occasion to take a parcel of things you don’t want, that I may have to pay porters just for carrying them about. You’re going to look, and not to be looked at, and just to be able to say you’ve been to places where people mostly go who can afford it.”

On the whole, the visit to the Continent was a failure. Mr. Joseph could not make up his mind to the outlay necessary to make things go off pleasantly. He dragged the ladies from place to place, getting over the ground as fast as possible, selecting the cheapest hotels, and making comfort a very secondary consideration. He was pitiless when they complained of fatigue, hurried them

over their sight-seeing, bargained with guides, haggled with hotel-keepers, insulted and bullied everyone he came in contact with, and altogether behaved in a manner not very happily calculated to raise the national character either for liberality or courtesy. Poor Mrs. Thornleigh was thoroughly wretched the whole time ; she missed her little home comforts, and she worried herself about Horace and the maids, and hoped the former would not take to staying late in town, now there was no one to look after him but his Aunt Rebecca, whom he detested ; and that the girls would not be inviting their sweethearts to see them, or neglect the house-cleaning, which had been assigned them, or turn saucy, and give Miss Becky warning, if she looked too closely to see that they performed it. Her daughters had their full share of discomfort. They had to pay a price for being able to say in Elmsley that they had visited Heidelberg, and slept at Chamouni. Mr. Joseph was the most relentless guardian ladies could have. No pleasant loiterings in

picturesque localities—no purchasing souvenirs of the places they visited ; they might look as wistfully as they pleased at the carved ivories, Swiss toys, and Bohemian glass, that tempt so many feminine tourists to encumber themselves with the pretty useless trifles, but not one would he allow to be bought.

“ You’ll get everything of the kind for half the money at the Lowther Arcade, without the trouble of carrying it about two or three hundred miles. You’re safe to be cheated if you buy anything here.”

And it was sore trouble to be so limited in their wardrobes. Never did three more ill-dressed, limp, unlovely-looking Englishwomen than Mrs. Thornleigh and her daughters belie their countrywomen’s character for good looks and good taste. Even Mr. Joseph began to wish he had been a little less rigorous as to luggage when they came across Captain Osborne, who, having escaped from Elmsley, and his onerous position as master of the largest house in the neighbourhood, was

enjoying his holiday almost as much as if, like a hard-working barrister or author, he had earned it. But if the Misses Thornleigh shrunk from meeting Captain Osborne in their travel-worn attire, he was fully as anxious to avoid meeting them. Not for this had he come to Wiesbaden—not for this had he left Elmsley. So, when Mr. Joseph Thornleigh, desirous to make the best use of such an opportunity of improving his acquaintance with the Elmsley magnate, met him at every turn, pestering him with assiduous civilities, which he was too good-natured to resent, but not gracious enough to receive, the Captain left the pleasant quarters where he had intended to remain located for at least a month, departing one fine morning before any of the Thornleighs were stirring, and taking care to leave no clue by which they could track him to his next destination.

“One must be civil to one’s country neighbours in one’s own place,” thought the Captain; “but, hang it! one can’t have country neighbours all over the world. I was in hopes, when I left

home, I had got quit of my responsibilities (as Mrs. Waybrooke calls them) for a time."

Before Captain Osborne reached Elmsley again, he had to find his responsibilities laid heavier on him than ever.

At last the Thornleighs returned home, greatly to the satisfaction of the ladies of the party. Mrs. Joseph took to her bed for a week on her return, and devoutly hoped she had done with travelling for ever; and the girls put the best face they could upon what had been the most uncomfortable portion of their lives, and talked as if they had made the journey *en princesse*, under the guardianship of a protector whose liberality and indulgence had been unbounded.

Mr. Joseph Thornleigh himself was very well satisfied; he had done the thing cheap, given his girls the benefit of foreign travel, which ought to enable them to hold their own successfully against those who had no such advantages, for at least fifty pounds less than it would have cost anybody else to have gone over the same ground with the

same number. They returned early in September, and even then Mrs. Waybrooke had heard nothing of her prodigal. Nothing!—although in the second column of the *Times*, day after day, appeals had been made to A. W. to return to his home, and all would be forgotten and forgiven.

There was no tracing Artie. He had left Oxford on foot, taking with him, it was ascertained, only a small valise; and the direction in which he had travelled, and his ultimate destination, were alike unknown. But from the Oxford tradesmen bills came pouring in thick and fast—bills that Mrs. Waybrooke would have found it very difficult to meet, had she not wisely (knowing that young men at college are not apt to keep too strictly within their allowances), laid by every year a fair portion of her income, so that Artie's possible imprudences might not embarrass her too much. But she had never expected to find him heartless and cruel, as well as imprudent; she had never thought to be left like this, day after day, wearing her very heart out in suspense, imagining all sorts of evils, every-

thing possible and impossible in the way of grief, and trouble, and ill fortune, that could befall her boy.

Mr. Joseph came to see her the very day after his return to the Grange ; but he was of little use now. She had done without him all that he might, had he not been away from Elmsley, have advised her to do, and in her present state of nervous, anxious suspense, he nearly drove her mad by embodying in his own words the worst calamities her fears had shadowed forth. Nay, he went beyond her, for, cruel, and thoughtless of her sufferings as Artie had shown himself, still the mother who had reared the bright, loving boy, could not picture him even now as wholly evil ; he might be ill, dying, even dead, but he could not—no, he *could* not have become like one of the foreign gamblers of whom Mr. Joseph spoke—a human bird of prey, fattening on the follies of his fellow-men—neither did she think it very probable she would ever be called on to make good, at the cost of half her fortune, some bill to which Artie had attached

her name; she could never credit this of her Artie, who had never told her a lie in all his life. But it chafed her terribly to hear Mr. Joseph vaguely hinting at such horrors, in his hard, husky voice—evidently believing, all the time, he was acting the part of a kind and sympathising friend, and helping her to bear up under her affliction. He really seemed so sorry for her—he had a son of his own, and so clearly meant well, after his own fashion, that she was compelled to bear with him as patiently as she might, instead of ringing the bell for him to be shown the door, as all the time she was longing to do.

She hoped he would not repeat his visit—he could be of no service now, and it was too dreadful to hear all these surmises as to what *might* have induced Artie to abscond in this mysterious manner; or to know that any one could think him capable of more than utter folly and cruel thoughtlessness.

But Mr. Joseph had his own notions of neighbourly duty, and not an evening passed, unless

he had positive engagements at home or elsewhere, but he came to sit with her—and, as he thought, comfort her—for an hour or two.

Oh! those comfortings, what an infliction they were to her, though her consoler, seeing she *would* not agree with him that Artie could possibly have become either card-sharper or forger, took another and equally cheering way of solacing her. Not a body was found in the Thames, but he would suggest that it might be Artie's—not a railway accident happened to an unknown individual, but he recognized Artie's portrait in the description of him. If a murder took place with circumstances of mystery around the victim, he was sure to make up his mind that that victim was his friend's son; and all these dreary imaginings were poured night after night into Mrs. Waybrooke's ear, till, if it had not been for her own firm persuasion that Artie was still living, and must return sooner or later, and that at any and every moment, his home must be kept ready, his chamber prepared, and his mother waiting for him, I think she would

have left the neighbourhood, sheerly to escape these harrowing consolations.

It had been impossible to prevent the news of Artie's disappearance reaching the Marchdales. But if anything could have cheered Artie's mother, it would have been the way in which they met it. There was not a word of blame of the fugitive.

"The best men have done foolish things in their youth," Mr. Marchdale said ; "and I expect, Mrs. Waybrooke, your son will be sufficiently punished for this folly when he hears how much it has cost you."

Mrs. Marchdale, too, was as evidently concerned and sorry as one mother could be for another's grief, so that Mrs. Waybrooke was almost ready to forgive her for being the parent of the innocent cause of all this mischief. She watched Clarice sharply about this time. Her eyes had shed many tears lately, but they were still sufficiently keen, and she saw a troubled anxious expression, when Artie's flight was spoken of, steal over the fair

face, and a frightened wondering look come into the innocent eyes, as if their owner was speculating as to her share in this trouble.

It is possible that, if Artie had remained in the neighbourhood, Clarice would never have given him, as a lover, another thought; but now that he had disappeared in this rash, absurd manner, I am afraid she suffered her mind to perplex itself over the problem as to *what* had caused his flight, and not only to connect it somehow with that awkwardness of his when he flattened her rosebuds, but to wish sometimes she had been less angry with him on the occasion.

CHAPTER XI.

MAGDALENE saw little of her friends that may, when she visited the Manosque in that autumn. Philip Wendell had overworked himself, people said, and so had been obliged to take a holiday at last, for fear of breaking down altogether. And it was best that he should be away, Magdalene thought—much better that they should not meet yet awhile—there was so much that it would be well for them both first to forget. And then she asked herself if forgetfulness *was* best? That glorious love, with its hopes and visions—its deification of its one human idol—that love which had bathed the earth with a light and a splendour caught from dreamland—which had made common things so beautiful, and daily life flow like a poet's verse; was *this* love to be forgotten?—

stamped from her memory as if it had never been? Better she should never see her lover's face again, than look upon it with the calmness forgetfulness

And yet—ah! she knew now how
No longer to meet him!—felt in her heart of
pride that the brightest prospect her visit had
could, it had been the chance of seeing him. It
might have been a thing for her pride that Philip
Wendell was not there for her to encounter; but,
I think, she would have been ready to sacrifice her
pride a little.

It was not overwork, however, that had made Philip Wendell seek a respite from the labours of his curacy; neither was it, as some of the younger ladies thought, the cross his love had met, that induced him to see if change could bring forgetfulness. A greater weariness was on Philip Wendell than work would ever have entailed—a heavier trouble than a lost love weighed him down.

It is possible that if he had never felt himself called upon to make the sacrifice he had done in giving up Magdalene, he might not have scrutin-

ized too closely the worthiness of the cause for which he had resigned her. It is *just* possible, but I think, myself, that sooner or later the time would have come to him, as it inevitably does to all earnest minds, when doubts thicken, and clouds obscure the mental horizon that has been hitherto so clear and bright. Be that as it may, the time had come to Philip Wendell when he could no longer give the implicit belief in all his Church dictated to him that he had done—when he began to question if that Church was indeed as faultless and as pure as he had thought it—whether there were not spots in the sun that he had worshipped—specks in the diamond he had so treasured. He suffered very much in this mental conflict, for he had believed so implicitly in the perfection of this Church, that it was terrible to him to think that there could be a flaw or a weak place in it. He prayed, and read, and thought, and studied; and prayer, and thought, and study only brought him to one conclusion—that the old formulas he had held by, and the

creeds he had so often read, were becoming empty words to him, instead of the things of life and power that they had been.

And yet he called himself a Churchman still. No nobler form of worship than that which, as a priest, he had offered up Sunday after Sunday, could, in his thinking, ever be. But he began to doubt his fitness to lead this worship, seeing that, glorious as he still held it, he no longer gave the implicit credence to all the doctrines enunciated in the "sound form of words" that he had hitherto done. He might be a worshipper before the altar still—he felt himself unfit to serve it. A less scrupulous, less honourable mind, might have had no such misgivings; but Philip was morbidly sensitive on such points—morbidly fearful of going a hair's breadth astray from the right path. Many another man in his place would have satisfied himself by simply abstaining from touching in the pulpit upon those points on which his mind was not assured, and making out some interpretation for himself of the inner meaning of such for-

mulas as he was bound to read, that would make him feel justified in doing so, however, literally, he might differ from them. Philip Wendell was not one of these. He could walk by no wavering light—tread no uncertain path. He must feel assured that he had firm, tangible reasons for the faith that was in him before he could preach that faith. He must be fully satisfied if these things were so before he could speak of them. He would give no half allegiance—if he served his Church, it must be, as before, with all his heart and soul, or he must give up his place as ministrant, and be content to worship in the outer courts. If he could only have looked at things as many now-a-days have done—if he could only have pointed out the short-comings of his Church—held up a torch to show the spots in her garments—the flaws in her beauty, and made himself famous for his critical acumen and keen-sighted discrimination, he might, after all, have fulfilled Mrs. Marchdale's prophecy, and become a bishop. As it was, he began to feel very doubtful whether

he should dare remain even a simple Curate.

I am not writing a theological treatise. I am not going to tell you how or in what Philip Wendell began to think that the old lights by which he had hitherto walked were less trustworthy guides than he had deemed them. Neither is it for me to say whether in this he was right or wrong. Why should I? What is it to you or me, reader, the views that this man took of the awful and recondite mysteries of unseen things? What have we to do with his wrestlings and strivings for some firm rock to place his foot on, that he might not perish in the wide sea of doubt? Enough for us that, however far astray he might have gone, he was still honest and true—his very truth and honesty causing his greatest misery. He *could* not rest content unless assured that he was giving no half-service to his God. He could not bring himself to utter words with his lips to which his heart responded not.

One good came out of all this trouble. If this Church to which he had sacrificed all that his

heart held dearest was not infallible, were those so much to be contemned as he had thought them who held aloof from her? Might there not—oh! might there not, after all, be some safe common ground where those who recognised one Lord and Christ might join in fellowship together? And he repented him now of the hard things he had thought, and the stern way in which he had turned aside from those who had differed from him. How he contemned himself now for the pride which had prevented his recognizing old Mr. Thynne as a fellow-labourer in one common field; and at times a longing came over him to go to the old man, who had lived his life before he (Philip) had begun his, and lay his burthen of doubts and uncertainties at his feet, and ask him, if he could, to lighten it. But he would not do this yet—he would try first to battle out his way from the darkness into the light; and to do this better he would escape for awhile from the many little cares, and petty trials to temper, and interruptions to thought, that his duties at Elmsley entailed on him.

So, as I have said, he left the village for a time, and turned his steps abroad, travelling through those parts of the Continent—often on foot—where he was least likely to meet with English tourists. He travelled with his eyes turned inwards; for all that Philip Wendell saw of the people amongst whom he sojourned, of the cities he passed through, he might almost as well have remained at home. He went abroad to work out, if he could, the problems that had perplexed him; and if he found he could not solve them, to decide what, as an honest man, it behoved him best to do.

But he found no rest as to the things which troubled him. He might as well have remained at Elmsley for all the peace his soul had found elsewhere. The mountains brought him no nearer to the unseen world; the rivers from their depths could whisper nothing of the deeper mysteries which had perplexed him. He was as far off truth as ever. Only one thing seemed clear; the work he had taken up so eagerly, and to which he had given himself with such an earnest purpose—

for which he had resigned so much, was not work for him. He might serve his God, but in other ways than those he had chosen for himself; and then the thought of Magdalene's pale face, and tearless agony, as he had seen her last, came across him; and the memory of Mrs. Marchdale's words—"There are other ways of serving God than before the altar."

Ah! it was for nothing, then—nothing, that he had crushed not only his own heart, but that of the girl who had so loved him—that he had himself placed a barrier between them which Magdalene's pride, or his own, might find insurmountable. For, if he gave up the Church, he gave up with it all hopes of assistance from his family. It was late in the day for him to take up any other profession; and he knew too well the prejudices of his relatives to think that they would easily forgive his abandoning the one they had chosen for him, or help him forward in any other. He could not ask Magdalene to share his poverty with him. He had put her away when life was easy

and his path a pleasant one ; had himself loosened the grasp of the fond arms that would have clung around him for ever ; had left her to bear the misery and shame her wretched mother had brought on her, without help from him ; and now that his time had come of trouble and possible humiliation, certainly of poverty and struggle, he felt that she must be as far from him as ever.

And he tried to cheat himself into thinking that it might be for the best after all. "I have no thoughts of wife or home to trouble me. Nothing but myself to care for. None but myself to injure, let me take what course I may. And yet—and yet Magdalene would have stood bravely by me now—I think she would have been well content to share a garret with her husband, if, with a clear conscience, he could give her no better home. Ah ! well, poor child, I who would not let her share my pleasant places with me, must be content to tread the thorny ones alone."

CHAPTER XII.

IN one of the pleasantest rooms in the best hotel at Heidelberg, leaning back in a comfortably-stuffed chair, his slippered feet resting on another, a cigar of the choicest quality in his mouth, sat Captain Osborne. He had taken up his position by the open window which overlooked the market-place, and his placid enjoyment was enhanced by the contrast between his own repose and the busy stream of life flowing beneath him.

The Captain was, in his quiet way, thoroughly happy. It was a relief, and a very great one, to have left Elmsley for a time—Elmsley, where his responsibilities, as the wealthiest man and the master of the great house of the neighbourhood, weighed so heavily upon him. For he had been

trying lately to do his duty, after the fashion Mrs. Waybrooke had once taken it upon her to expound his duty to him. And the doing so had bored him terribly. He had given dinner-parties, and croquet-parties, and entertained the Rector and all the dull respectabilities whose position rendered their being invited to Osborne House a necessary piece of courtesy on the part of its master; and had found himself, with the best intentions in the world, committing innumerable blunders, and displeasing the very people with whom he most wished to be on neighbourly terms.

For suburban society is a dreary thing. Its gradations are so infinite, its punctilios so minute, its sensitiveness so extreme. And Elmsley, with its environs, was to the full as unfortunate in this respect as any similar locality. The people with two horses to their carriage looked shyly upon those that possessed but one; those with a lodge, if it only opened upon a dozen yards of gravel path, held themselves above those who possessed none. And those who in London would have

been perfectly content with their rightful position as members of the middle class, if they only possessed paddock enough to graze a cow, and a few stunted shrubberies around their house, looked upon themselves as lords of the soil at once—as belonging to the upper classes, in fact, and were in the habit of talking of the aristocracy as if they formed a component part of it.

And all this to Captain Osborne—a simple-mannered, unaffected gentleman—was insufferable. It annoyed and irritated him. He had an easy temper, but his Elmsley neighbours were too much for it. Mrs. Marchdale, who might have helped him under the inflictions of his onerous position, would do nothing but laugh at his troubles when he sought her assistance in them. She had the best of it, for she laughed not only at him, but at everyone else, caricaturing them to her heart's content, till her portfolio was full of ludicrous sketches, at which her husband looked grave; that being what no one else did who was privileged to see them.

"Mrs. Waybrooke has told you, sir," she would say to the Captain, "what your duties are; and however disagreeable they may be, you are bound to perform them. But I don't see that it's incumbent on me to assist you in their fulfilment. *Chacun à son metier*, Captain Osborne; it's yours to entertain the respectabilities of Elmsley—it's mine to get what amusement I can from them in another way."

And beyond presiding at one or two fêtes given in the Osborne grounds, Mrs. Marchdale would do nothing to render the Captain's labours as a host less laborious. So he went through them alone, and offended people right and left by forgetting the thousand and one little matters he ought to have remembered; by taking the wrong lady in to dinner, and asking people who were at variance to meet each other, and not arranging his guests judiciously, according to their social status, or what they imagined such; till at last, feeling, to use his own words, that he made "a mess of the thing altogether"—bored to death with his neigh-

bours, weary of his large house, and wishing his uncle had found some one else to sustain the family dignity, and left him one quarter of his present income, so that he could have escaped the trouble his wealth brought with it, he left England for the Continent, in the hope of forgetting for awhile the burthen of his greatness.

It was so pleasant, this bright sunny afternoon, to look back on all he had escaped from, and to feel there was no likelihood of his duties and responsibilities thrusting themselves upon him here. He looked down upon the busy market-place below.

“Not a pretty face to be seen. That *is* the one drawback to coming abroad. One would never know else how much ugliness the human countenance is capable of. Surely I’ve seen that figure before. One of my precious compatriots. It is—no—it isn’t—Wendell! by George! Looking as if he had all the world and its wife to provide for. He’s in want of something, and can’t meet with it, if I may judge by the faces of those he’s

stopping. Now, what's he after? I'll send down and let him know I'm here. He *can't* bore me to give a reading at the Working-men's Rooms to-night, nor expect me to get up instanter and go with him on a sanitary visitation to every cottage in the place that isn't drained to his fancy. What a nose that man has for bad smells! No, I think I'm safe in letting him know of my whereabouts. And he's a good fellow in the main. Come, like me, for a holiday, I suppose. I wonder which of us wants it most? That Elmsley's the most exhausting place in creation!"

The Captain rang the bell, and pointing out Philip, despatched the waiter in quest of him. He saw the Curate's face brighten up when Franz addressed him, and presently found Philip grasping his hand warmly, while congratulating himself upon the encounter.

"You are the very person I most wished to see, Captain Osborne. It is quite an unexpected piece of good fortune to have fallen in with you."

"Very glad you think so, my dear fellow. One

is glad of a compatriot abroad after all. Sit down—it's no use offering you a cigar, I know—and let's hear how long you think of staying here. Can't we row in the same boat for awhile? I'll shape my course according to yours, if that's all. It don't much matter to me which way it is. I was frightened from Wiesbaden by the Thornleighs, as I didn't care to be bored by the father, or married by either of the daughters. That eldest is capable of anything."

"We can't join our courses together," said Philip, "as I return to England to-morrow, which makes my having met with you doubly fortunate."

The Captain looked puzzled—had he been mistaken after all? Was the Curate going to extract his sign-manual from him to some projected improvements, which might involve the pulling down half Elmsley?—or all, at least, that called him owner—or an addition to the almshouses, or another wing to the school? It was quite possible. Nothing of the kind would have surprised any one who knew him, as coming from Philip Wendell.

Captain Osborne half groaned, but said submissively,

“Well, my dear fellow—well, what is it I’m to do, or empower you to do, before we part company?”

He flung away the rest of his cigar—he hated smoking with a troubled mind—and looked uneasily at the man who seemed to have come over the sea on purpose to remind him of the cares and troubles he thought he had escaped from.

“The first thing you can help me in is by telling me whether there is an English doctor in this town? I’ve been inquiring right and left, but can’t hear of one. If there is none, I should like the best native advice the place affords. But don’t look so surprised,” added the Curate, “it’s not for myself; but the fact is, I’ve run against Artie Waybrooke. He’s ill—very seriously ill—at Zinzendorf, a hamlet five miles from here. He’s not fit to be left where he is without a soul to see after him. His money, I expect, is at the lowest ebb. He knows very little German, and as I *must* leave

him to-morrow, being bound to preach next Sunday's sermon at Elmsley, it seems quite a special Providence having met with you. I shall leave the poor fellow in your hands with such confidence. If you'll allow me, I'll ring the bell, and inquire about the doctor, and when I've despatched a messenger for him, tell you how I fell in with that unhappy boy."

"Unhappy, indeed!" thought the Captain. "And so I've left Elmsley behind on purpose to turn nurse-tender to Mrs. Waybrooke's big baby, and take him safely back to his mother's leading-strings. Why, the Thornleighs would have been a milder infliction than this!"

There was no English doctor to be had, but the landlord spoke highly in praise of one Herr Weisel, and the waiter was despatched in quest of him. Meanwhile Philip enlightened the Captain as to the particulars of Artie's recent history, and the manner in which he had met with him.

Artie had left Oxford with some very vague and ill-defined intentions as to his future—his pre-

dominant idea being to get away as far from home as possible. There had been a Damon and Pythias friendship between himself and another boy at school, who afterwards obtained a situation in a mercantile house at Frankfort, where an English clerk was required. The two lads kept up a tolerably close correspondence, and when Artie's difficulties pressed upon him, he bethought him of his old friend at Frankfort, and determined to seek him out, in the hope that he might be the means of obtaining employment for him, either in the same counting-house with himself, or by procuring pupils who required instruction in the English language.

He acted upon this very feasible idea, and found, as might have been expected, that his former chum could do very little to assist him beyond exercising what slender hospitality was in his power, that English clerks were not wanted at Frankfort, and English tutors were not at a premium. Thus it was not long before Artie found his finances nearly exhausted. But at last what

appeared a promising opportunity offered. The widowed Baroness Von Schwaibe was in want of a bear-leader for her young hopefuls. She required that he should be a gentleman, and either French or English. Artie thought himself extremely fortunate in obtaining the situation. The Baroness for a few days thought herself equally fortunate in obtaining him. She spoiled her boys, and required little more from a tutor than that he should assist her in doing so, and prevent any of the disagreeable consequences likely to accrue therefrom. But Artie was not of the stuff of which patient teachers are made, neither was teaching his vocation, and at the end of a fortnight he was summarily dismissed from the Baroness's establishment, because he had soundly chastised Paul and Hermann for having played a practical joke upon him. Resolving not to be again a burthen to his friend, he started off with the intention of returning to England, and looking out in London for employment of any nature by which he might support himself without troubling his mother.

He could not yet bring himself to return to her, like the prodigal son, and ask her to forgive him for having sinned against Heaven and before her—not yet; but a stronger will than Artie's checked him, and helpless, ill, and fevered, he lay down, as he thought, to die in the little inn at Zinzendorf, the very night that Philip Wendell paused there from his wanderings.

The good-natured mistress of the Gasthof, who had been alarmed at the sight of Arthur's illness, hardly knew how to express her delight when she saw one of his countrymen enter her abode. But helpless and ill as Artie was, he shrank away from Philip's voice, hiding his face in the pillows of his bed, and saying, feebly—

“I never thought again to see any one from Elmsley.”

All that night Philip Wendell stayed with the boy, playing the part of nurse to the best of his ability, bathing the burning hands and forehead, smoothing the pillows, and succeeding in making a cup of tea in true English fashion, which, as

poor Artie said, was "worth all the doctor's stuff that ever was made."

Till this time he had always looked shyly upon the Curate; Artie's notions of clerical duty did not reach quite so high a standard as Philip Wendell's; and though the former always intended to do his duty according to his lights when he entered on his vocation, still his lights were very different ones to Philip's. And Artie's weak impulsive character felt cowed sometimes by the stern unflinching nature, pitiless to its own shortcomings, and not very lenient to those of others, that he recognised in Philip Wendell. But that long, long night in the Gasthof, under such circumstances, did more to bring the two young men together than years of mere acquaintanceship in Elmsley would have done. Philip began to feel that there was something more lovable at times in weakness than in strength; and to find himself listening with more pity and less reproach to Artie's confessions of his derelictions than he would have thought possible a short time back.

"I'm afraid I've been a scamp and a fool, Wendell. I suppose you know what drove me to it—though I've no right to blame any one but myself—but if things had only gone differently between Clarice Marchdale and me, I should never have come to this."

Philip Wendell looked on the speaker with a wondering compassion—that any one for the love of "a slight girl" should cast his life away! It was an incomprehensible thing to one, in the scheme of whose life love had held but a very secondary place; yet I doubt if Magdalene had not been as dearly loved as ever Clarice was, only, in Philip Wendell's estimation, happiness, whether his own or another's, was not the first point to be considered. It was quite possible that, in the years to come, Artie Waybrooke would learn to laugh at his boyish love, and the follies it had led him into, and see another face as fair in his eyes as ever Clarice's had been, and smiles as well worth winning; but if Philip Wendell had lived to the age of the Patriarchs, Magdalene would have been

cherished as dearly and prized as fondly as in the hour when, by the water-side, he first wooed her for his own. And in all Magdalene's sorrow not a doubt that she was unloved ever troubled her. She had much to bear, but the sharpest, keenest pang of all—that of loving unworthily or loving without return, had been spared her.

“I don't think I'm the right sort of fellow for the Church,” Artie said after a while; “I'm sure I'm not, if you are, Wendell. Perhaps it's best that I've broken loose from it all, but I don't know that my mother will ever be brought to see it. I wonder what I'd better turn to! Oh, Lord! the world's full of nothing but worry and work!—what a blessing if one could but lie down and forget it all!”

He fell into a deep slumber, from which, instead of arousing, as Philip had hoped he would, refreshed and strengthened, he awoke much worse—the fever had increased; his hands and lips were burning, and his thirst almost incessant. There was no doctor within three miles, Philip

heard, and it was but five to Heidelberg, where he might possibly meet with an English one. He waited for a time, and then, having exacted a promise from Frau Heinsel that she would remain with the invalid during his absence, started off, intending to proceed to that town in search of medical assistance.

“We must do the best we can with the German, as there’s no countryman of our own to be met with,” he said to the Captain; “and now that I have fallen in with you, half my difficulties respecting this poor fellow seem at an end. The Gasthof is tolerably clean—of course you won’t meet with such accommodation as you have found here—still you can make shift very well for a time; and you will be able to see that Artie is properly looked to. We must get the doctor to recommend us a nurse; and then, if you take up your quarters at the village at once, I can start off to-morrow on my homeward route, and shall be able to set Mrs. Waybrooke’s mind at rest about Artie. I suppose you’ll bring him home with you as soon

as he's well enough to travel? The poor runaway will be glad to find himself at home again."

"What on earth am I to do with myself in that hole of a Gasthof?" asked the Captain, impatiently. "You don't suppose, Wendell, I'm going to turn sick nurse in earnest to Master Artie? Why, hang it! I shall be dead myself before a week is out if I do! It's a sort of thing not at all in my line," he added, plaintively. "I'll stand the expenses to any amount, but to shut myself up in a German beershop, to look after a boy that has run away from his mother, is more than I'm equal to!—upon my word it is!"

"Oh! I think you'll be able to manage it," said Philip, in a cheerful, reassuring tone. To him it appeared that the task of seeing Artie Waybrooke through his illness was just the one especial piece of work given at that precise time for the Captain to do, and it was purely a matter-of-course proceeding on his part to require it from him. "Frau Heinsel seems a worthy creature," he added. "She will do her best to make you com-

fortable ; besides, after all, it is not your comfort, but Artie's, that's the chief thing to be thought of just now. Don't you see it ?”

I am afraid the poor Captain did *not* see it. But he was one of the best-natured creatures breathing ; therefore, when the doctor arrived, he meekly rose, and followed Philip and him into the carriage which had been prepared for them, and they drove off to Zinzendorf.

The doctor was a cheery, rotund little man, and did not take a very gloomy view of Artie's case. The young Herr was ill—very ill, but there was every likelihood that he would battle through it. A nurse ? Well, he hardly knew of one that he could recommend ; but, after all, with his good friends, and the Frau of the Gasthof, he would scarcely need one, provided he took his medicines regularly, and the two Herren would look to that.

Philip explained that he should not be in a position to look to it much longer, but that his friend the Captain was prepared to take charge of the patient, and would remain at the Gasthof for

the purpose of doing so. Herr Mandel appeared quite impressed with the Captain's amiability, and returned in the carriage which had brought them accompanied by Philip, who was to bring back the medicine from Heidelberg, and had promised the Captain that he would charge Cripps, his man, to be at the Gasthof early the following morning, to receive his master's directions as to what he should require during his stay in Zinzen-dorf.

So it came to pass that Captain Osborne found himself installed in Artie's sick chamber, as nurse, during Philip's temporary absence, and with a fair prospect of seeing the situation devolve entirely on him the next day. He looked disconsolately out of window—upon a very different prospect to that from the hotel at Heidelberg. The dull village street, with here and there a *mägdchen* carrying a child, or one or two urchins at play; life in its slowest, stillest form—if, indeed, thought the Captain, it is life at all. How on earth should he support existence during the whole time of

Artie's illness? Even Elmsley would be better than the position into which Philip Wendell had brought him! Elmsley, where, at least, if his responsibilities weighed heavily on him, he had all outward means and appliances to help him bear their burthen; but here, with no books—or only the few he had brought with him—no society—not even Mrs. Marchdale to bemoan his miseries to, and to laugh at them in return. No decent cooking, unless Cripps could be brought to see that it was part of his duty as a valet to go to Heidelberg daily to cater for his master's sustenance, or—and Cripps was a universal genius—might think it not beneath him to turn cook himself. And then arose another question—Was there anything to cook in the place? There were two or three fowls parading up and down the village street, but *toujours poulet* would be as bad as *toujours perdrix*. He doubted the existence of a butcher's shop in the place; and if there were none, how could Cripps exercise his culinary skill, supposing he would deign to do so? And where,

too, would Artie get the beef-tea and mutton-broth, which the Captain had always heard were considered indispensable in illness? And then, as he thought of Artie's necessities, the Captain walked up to the bed and looked down upon the flushed, restless sleeper, who lay uneasily there.

"It's a good thing his mother can't see him!" he thought. "Poor fellow! I hope both he and I shall pull through the mess we've got into; but if ever I come abroad again for the sake of a quiet life, may my good stars keep me clear from every soul I've ever known in Elmsley!"

CHAPTER XIII.

ARTIE did pull through the mess, and so did the Captain. After all, things went better than the latter had expected. Frau Heinsel exerted herself wonderfully; Artie's illness and his fair English face appealed to all her sympathies, and the Captain, by his devotion to his friend, caused himself to be regarded as a suitable object for every attention on her part. Then the Gasthof was clean, and tolerably commodious; and Cripps was very gracious, and slept in Artie's room at night, and compounded wonderful cooling drinks, and not only found a butcher, but succeeded in teaching him how to cut steaks and chops in English fashion, which he himself deigned afterwards to cook; while in other matters Frau Heinsel acquitted her-

self in a manner that gave the Captain very little cause to regret, as far as his dinners were concerned, that he had changed his quarters from the Hotel at Heidelberg to the Gasthof at Zinzen-dorf.

Artie made progress every day, and Captain Osborne became, as Philip Wendell had done, interested in the foolish boy whose very helplessness was the best claim he could have upon them. As soon as the fever had sufficiently abated to allow of his speaking rationally upon any subject, Artie persuaded the Captain to write to his mother, telling her *not* to come. He shrank from meeting the fond eyes into which he felt he must have brought so many tears. But by that time Mrs. Waybrooke was on her way ; for, in spite of Philip's arguments that Artie was safe enough in the Captain's charge, and that he would now return to her hale and strong, she persisted in starting off to nurse her boy herself.

"Don't tell me, Mr. Wendell !" she said impatiently ; " what do men know about illness ? And

as to Captain Osborne, he is one of the best creatures in the world ; but half the time he says yes because it's too much trouble for him to say no ; and whatever Artie fancies, however unsuitable it may be, he will be sure to give him, as the easiest way of keeping him quiet. But, please don't be cross with me—I know I'm very ungrateful to both you and him, snubbing and scolding you like this, when I owe you a thousand thanks—but I must look to my boy myself ; so I shall start off tomorrow, and pay you all the thanks I owe when I come back."

And Artie was very glad to meet his mother, though he shrank back at first from the embraces whose very fondness seemed to reproach him. As for Captain Osborne, she told him he had re-deemed his character for ever in her eyes by the manner in which he had distinguished himself as a sick nurse.

"I'll never call you idle again—not even if you let a whole summer go by without a single outdoor party."

She praised Cripps, till that invaluable functionary began to think that a lady so keen-sighted to his merits must have some of her own, and exerted himself more strenuously than ever to please a lady of such discrimination. And when Artie slept she wrote long letters to her daughters, describing the Gasthof and Frau Heinsel, and extolling Captain Osborne to the skies—quizzing him a little, too, but so pleasantly and genially, that had he read her letters, he would have enjoyed them as keenly as any one.

Limited as her knowledge of German was, she got on famously with Frau Heinsel, and altogether the impression she made upon the Captain was such, that in strict confidence he imparted to himself the wish that Mrs. Waybrooke were just five-and-twenty years younger.

“What a deal of trouble a woman with her tact and energy would save me if she were mistress of that big house of mine! I really think I’m the most unlucky fellow going! There are just two women who would suit me capitally as

wives, and one of them's old enough to be my mother, and the other has got a husband already. I do consider that when my uncle left me that place he ought to have provided me with a wife to look after it."

Artie recovered very rapidly under his mother's skilful nursing, but there was one point on which he was firm—he would no longer look upon the Church as his future profession.

"I'm not fit for it," he said—"I don't suit it, and it doesn't suit me. I think, if I'd had any work to do that my heart was really in, I shouldn't have got into this mess. But, you see, I'd nothing to keep me from thinking of what I'd no business to think of. I shan't make a fool of myself that way again, mother, don't be afraid; but let me have some work to do that I can turn to with a will. I'm not of the stuff Philip Wendell's made of; and I couldn't, even to please you, *madre mia*, take things in the easy-going style Mr. Darnell does. Besides, it's too late in the day for that. Matters are managed in quite another style

now to what they were in his younger days."

"You're right there, old fellow," said Captain Osborne. "'Pon my soul, Mrs. Waybrooke, the work people expect from the clergy now-a-days is something tremendous. A fellow need have the constitution of a horse to stand it. We really must see if we can't find some easier way for Artie to earn his bread and cheese than by slaving in Wendell's fashion. However he does it! I declare sometimes, only to think of the work he gets through, makes me feel quite exhausted."

It was a sad disappointment to Artie's mother. Still, she had her boy again, and Captain Osborne was very kind. The firm was still in existence in which his great-grandfather, the first Osborne of Elmsley, had made his money; and there had always been an hereditary connection and friendship between the descendants of the first Osborne of Elmsley and the family of the leading partners in the still flourishing mercantile house. So it was easy for him to obtain the promise of a berth in the counting-house for Artie, as soon as he

should be able to fulfil the duties required of him ; and Artie was very grateful for such an opportunity of redeeming the past, while his mother thanked the Captain for his good offices with a resigned submission to plans which were so completely opposed to the views she had so long entertained for her boy.

“The young fellow will do well enough,” thought the Captain, “and work his way up to a much better income than he would ever have made in the Church ; and who knows but, after all, he may win his lady-love yet ? I’ve sometimes thought as I *can’t* have Clarice’s mother (for I suppose it would not be quite the thing to poison Marchdale)—I’d go in for Clarice herself. But it would be a tremendous bore making love to a girl like that. Choice fruit, however, always hangs high on the tree—that kind of fruit, at any rate ; and I should never fancy the apple that fell of itself into my mouth.”

It was towards the middle of October when Philip Wendell returned to Elmsley ; and Magda-

lene had not yet left it. So that once or twice they met accidentally, and by this time Magdalene had so far schooled herself into all needful propriety, that however her pulses might have quickened, or her heart throbbed, she was as calmly decorous as any young lady under such trying circumstances had need to be. Philip was not nearly so equal to the occasion. He *could* not repress the lingering clasp his fingers seemed to give of themselves when their hands met. He *could* not prevent the wistful look, with its loving questioning tenderness, that told his longing to know how she had borne the separation, and lived through the months since he had seen her last. And it seemed doubly hard, doubly bitter to feel that he must lose her after all, when the shrine to which he had sacrificed her had come to appear in his eyes an imperfect one—not worth the gifts he had offered up to it. But the life of struggle that lay before him was one that *now* he could not dare ask Magdalene to share. Had he never resigned her, he might have given her the alternative of

relinquishing him or sharing his altered fortunes. He knew well what her choice would have been. But as they were apart, so they must remain—he was in no fit plight to go wooing afresh now.

For daily, more and more, the conviction grew upon him that fitly and honestly he could no longer be a priest. Let him come out of the battle as he might, while waging his warfare he was no safe guide for others. And there came doubts—awful, dreadful doubts!—was *all* uncertain?—all insecure?—how much might he believe?—how much cast from him as old fables and idle stories? Deeper and deeper the darkness was gathering round him. He had begun by doubting his fitness for the priesthood; he was fast beginning to fear lest he should have no right to the name of Christian. Oh! those love troubles that in the beginning of the year had weighed so heavily upon him!—how light, ah! even in the presence of Magdalene, when he looked upon the fair face that would never rest upon his bosom more, they now appeared. Those were troubles

to be met and grappled with ; sorrows that a man might feel keenly, but suffer bravely. However great the grief, the strength to bear it had been greater. But now to feel the ground that he had thought so secure slipping from beneath his feet ; day after day to realize that it was no longer a question, as he had at first thought it, of an especial rite or an isolated Creed, but that all that he had thought safest and firmest, most tangible and real, was becoming more and more lost in the dim mists of the cloud land his reason failed to pierce, or his mind's eye to fathom. It was a dreadful time for him. Sorrows came to Philip Wendell in after life, but never a sorrow like to this. To look up to the heavens with despairing eyes, and ask *is* there a God ? when before he had been as sure of Him, and that He Was as of the air he breathed and the light he saw by.

And this was what it had come to. One little doubt had been the cleft in the lute which now bade fair soon to be voiceless for ever.

Life was becoming almost a piece of clock-work

with him. He did his duties, as far as they could be done, mechanically and by rote—visited his poor and his schools; distributed his charities; lectured the mothers who neglected their children; and the drunkards who neglected their wives; but his heart went not with his work. He could not speak as he had spoken, of the unseen world to which all were hastening, and of the account all would have to render there for every duty left undone in this. And there were the dreadful Sundays! Prayers to be read by one who had lost his faith in them; sermons to be preached by one who knew not what to say with truth. For before all things, Philip Wendell was an honest man, and he was beginning to look upon himself as a living lie. Every now and then he encountered old Mr. Thynne. Sometimes they met in the country roads, as each was going his daily round of visiting; sometimes in the cottages of the sick or dying; for Mrs. Marchdale was not sectarian in her charities, and whether people chose to avail themselves of Mr. Thynne's spiritual

counsels or not, mattered little to her, if only she thought them in need of and fairly deserving temporal assistance. And the Curate began to look upon the old minister with a strange, wistful wonder. There was such an atmosphere of serene placid content about him. No summer eve more still in its repose than that old man at the close of life's long day.

Once or twice Philip had heard him comfort the hopelessly ill or the grievously afflicted. The words he used were very simple—so simple that every one came home to the heart and understanding of the hearer. No fear of one being lost by the way. But those words came from the speaker's inner consciousness—from his very soul; those words that spoke of things unseen, and an Invisible Power, were uttered with as much force of implicit, unquestioning belief as if he had been describing some occurrence in daily life that he had just been witnessing. Nay, it was less belief than knowledge—he seemed to *know* the very truth of all he uttered—as if to him to argue and to

reason upon such matters would have been absurd from its very needlessness.

“That man feels there is a God, as I feel there is a sun,” thought Philip. “Heaven is as real to him as the world around to me. I could find it in my heart to fling myself at his feet and cry, ‘Open mine eyes that I may see!’”

CHAPTER XIV.

A SMALL, neat, prettily-furnished parlour, lit by a bright coal fire, and a moderator lamp, which shone on well-stored bookshelves, on tastily-framed drawings—which had once been in Clarice Marchdale's portfolio—on a luxurious arm-chair—the gift of Mrs. Marchdale to its present occupant—and on the face of that occupant, an old man, looking thoughtfully at the flickering shapes of the changing firelight.

It was a good face and a beautiful one—a face that gave one a sense of rest and calm to look at it, and wherein one could read of sorrows that had been surmounted, of trials outlived, and of the peace passing understanding that remained when these had passed away. It was the face of old Mr. Thynne, the minister of the Chapel at Elms-

ley, whose erection had given rise to so many heartburnings in the place. It was difficult to see how any one could look on the old minister and entertain these feelings. Indeed, I think very few did so. Possibly the fact that it was almost impossible to associate the image of the mild-featured old man with any notions of proselytism or sectarian feeling, caused the High Church party to set their faces more strongly against Mrs. Marchdale, amongst whose Christian graces and womanly virtues I am afraid a meek and humble spirit could scarcely be accounted. She had worn her Dissent in the first place as a matter of course, simply to please her husband, being one of those women to whom obedience and sacrifice in great matters are easy things, if they have but their own way in little ones. But in Elmsley she had paraded her opinions—or rather Mr. Marchdale's—almost as she did her carriage, or her daughter's beauty; taking things with a high hand—a much higher hand than perhaps she would have done had her time been to come over again; and so

people found it a much easier way to denounce sectarianism when embodied in the form of Mrs. Marchdale, than in that of the gentle, white-haired old man who now sat peacefully by his fireside at the close of a dull winter's day.

His little trim servant, who acted both as maid and housekeeper, entered with the tea-tray, and the old gentleman drew up to the table, and prepared to indulge in what was his favourite repast—the only piece of epicurism he could possibly be charged with, being his partiality to tea—strong, plentiful, and of the finest quality. He helped himself to a cup, and took it, as usual, with his cat—a favourite tabby—sitting on his lap. Puss waited decorously till her master had taken his usual quantity—never less than five cups—and then sprang down to her own saucer of milk. Once there had been a time when wife and children had gathered round the minister's hearth, and of all those dearly loved ones nothing now remained to him but the memories of the happy hours when one home had held them all. He sat

by his fireside erection, the cat—the only living thing that shared it with him—again upon his knee, looking into the flames with a sad, dreamy wistfulness upon his face. This quiet evening hour was the time for all those old memories to come crowding on him; when the beloved wife, who had shared many a trouble with him, seemed almost present; when the daughter, who had died in the first bloom of her maiden promise; the brave, hopeful boy, who had been lost at sea; the tiny, fair-haired ones, who had come like spring flowers in the early days of his married life, and, like spring flowers, had passed away—were all around him.

He started from his reverie as the sound of clear boyish voices outside struck on his ear, and a sharp double knock was heard—a knock calling loudly and imperatively for immediate admittance. His face brightened.

“I suppose Cliffe is in want of a little help, and has come to the old man for it,” he said.

His supposition proved to be a correct one, for

Cliffe and Rowland Marchdale entered the room with books under their arms. This seemed to be a very usual proceeding on their part, for Martha briskly removed the tea-tray, and, the boys drawing up to the table, Cliffe opened his books, and was soon engaged with Mr. Thynne in construing a page of Thucydides.

The old minister was a splendid scholar, though few would have guessed as much from the simple sermons, plain, practical, and full of a child-like spirit of love and faith, which he delivered from the Chapel pulpit. Cliffe was sometimes very glad of his assistance, and Roley generally accompanied his brother on his visits, bringing his own books with him—making, in fact, quite a parade of the work he was going to get through, which generally ended, as it did to-night, in his falling asleep by the fire with the minister's cat on his knee.

Cliffe and Mr. Thynne worked closely for an hour, and then the former closed his books, and brought from his pocket the day's newspaper, and

a new book, which his mother had thought would please the minister.

"I think it is time we were going, sir, and I shall manage this famously now. I've been a sad troublesome fellow to you of late, but these old Greeks are terrible fellows to tackle. Rolles!—look at that boy! He's always going to sleep, Mr. Thynne—always asleep or in mischief—can't keep awake ten minutes over his lessons. If they were to give a fellow a prize for showing how little he could do, you'd get it, wouldn't you, old boy?"

"Don't bother!" cried Roley, impatiently stretching himself and yawning. "Get down, pussy."

He placed the cat gently on the ground. Roley was always kind and tender to little children and animals—a boy with a great deal of the mother's milk still in him, though as sturdy a fighter, when need be, as any lad in the school.

Mr. Thynne smoothed the boy's hair.

"It's a long way from your school in London,

Cliffe, remember that—enough to make young eyes drowsy when night-time comes, and the day's work is nearly over. Well, Roley, you are better friends now with the Grays, I hope?—not quite so fond of teaching them good manners by the aid of these two small fists? Ah! boys! boys! as if their hands were given them for no other earthly purpose than to fight each other with!"

"Well, but we couldn't fight without hands," said Roley, gravely; "and, you know, sir, ever since I pitched into those two Grays, they've been much better behaved—it's taught them to be civil, at any rate. But we're the best friends in the world now."

"That's well, my boy—be pitiful to the fatherless, even if, like the Grays, they are boys as old and as strong as yourself. I am glad to see you remember what I told you, and have tried to avoid fresh quarrels."

Roley looked into the fire with rather a confused expression on his face, while Cliffe burst out laughing.

"Don't give him credit for being too good, Mr. Thynne. He's only made it up with the Grays because a bigger fellow, that he's long wanted to serve out, was bullying them one day, and the poor little monkeys couldn't take their own part, so Rolles did it for them—and in very good style, too, for a young one," added Cliffe, with the calm, impartial approbation of an elder brother.

Mr. Thynne shook his head.

"Roley, Roley, did you think you only went to school to learn to fight?"

"Well—no—not exactly," said Roley, doubtfully. "There was no occasion, you see, sir—I pretty well knew how to do it before."

"It comes natural to some boys, I think, sir," said Cliffe gravely. "Roley's one of them. I don't believe he could keep out of a row any more than a duck could out of water. That's the reason that nice creature, Mrs. John Thornleigh, makes such a pet of him. Isn't it, Rolles? Don't you and she get up snug little tussles when you're

alone together, and see which can hit the hardest ? She'd always have him at her place, Mr. Thynne, if she could ; and I do believe Roley likes going. She's a fascinating person to take a fancy to, now, isn't she ?"

Roley looked crossly at the fire.

"She's not a bad sort, Cliffe, and you've no business to make game of her."

"Well, young one, you're quite right to stand up for your friends, let them be as queer as they may ; but what possesses you to care for that venomous old tigress ? Now, what attraction can she have, or ought she to have, Mr. Thynne, for a well-behaved pupil of the Middlesex College School. It's something quite inexplicable. Now, Rolles, is it that you and she indulge in a cozy cigar together ? That's it, you may be sure, sir."

"Cliffe, my boy, don't vex your brother," said the old minister. "Your mother knows best, and she is quite right in saying that the child may do the unhappy woman good, and she can do him no harm."

"I wonder," said Cliffe, more thoughtfully, "how things would have gone if we had left her in the snow that night? Perhaps, as matters have turned out, it would have been better if we had. Look at that poor girl Magdalene, and the split between her and Wendell. Though I call a fellow a sneak, myself, for throwing off a girl because her mother isn't quite what she should be—it's not what I should have done myself under the circumstances," Cliffe added with a grand air. He was now turned sixteen, and, in his own opinion, quite competent to discuss the Curate's conduct, or any one else's similarly situated. "But don't you think, Mr. Thynne, it would have been much better if Rolles and I had left Mrs. John where we found her that winter's night? It would have saved a great many people about here a deal of bother."

"However that may be, Cliffe, it would *not* have been the right thing for you to do at the time," said Mr. Thynne, gravely. "That was all

you had to think of then. That is all you need care about now."

"Well, young one," cried Cliffe, addressing his brother, "you seem ready to fall asleep again over that cat. You'll have to make up a bed for him, sir, if I don't take him off. Good night, and thank you for your help. Whatever honours I win when I go to College, I'm sure I shall owe them all to you. Roley! That boy's off again! Now, sir, take the books, and don't drop them in the mud."

Cliffe, with the lordliness appertaining to big brothers, gave Roley the larger portion of the exercise-books they had brought, and the two started off; while Mr. Thynne again took his place by the fire, and the cat resumed hers upon his knee.

"Would it have been for the best," the old man asked himself, "if those boys had left the wretched waif by the road-side, and she had never been restored to health and consciousness, and so been instrumental in disturbing the current of so

many lives, and wounding and wringing more than one young heart? If they had not lost the train that night, it was very possible Mrs. John Thornleigh would have been found stark and dead the next morning, and her husband might have gone to his grave without knowing that the wife he had so long thought far away in hers, was resting at last in the churchyard at Elmsley, near him. Yes, if those boys had only not lost the train, John Thornleigh might have been living still—or, at least, have died in peace, and Magdalene, by this time, might have been the wife of Philip Wendell. He should not have given her up," thought the old man; "his first duty was to her—poor child!—poor child!—ah! the wound may heal, but the scar will last for ever; and it was a cruel wound for *his* hand to inflict!"

There was again a knock at the door—a loud, firm, double knock, which made the very cat upon the minister's knee open her eyes, and turn in surprise as if to ask who this new-comer might be. The minister waited in wonder to learn who, at

this late hour, might be claiming admittance. Had it been a single knock, he would have been prepared for some claimant on his time or charity—to find, perhaps, that he was called upon to pray by the bedside of one or other of those who he knew were seriously ill, or that some demand was made upon his housekeeper's stores to meet a case of sudden and unforeseen illness. But a double knock at this time of night—now nearly nine, and at the door, too, of all those possessing a knocker, where double knocks were most unusual. He had not long to wait in suspense, for Martha announced Mr. Wendell; and, to the old minister's astonishment, the Curate advanced towards him and held out his hand.

“You look surprised to see me, Mr. Thynne. You cannot be more surprised than I should have been a year back to think that the time could ever come when I should ask you for aid and counsel. I ask both of you now. Will you give them to me?”

“Surely—surely,” said the old minister, with

his usual gentle courtesy, handing a chair to his unexpected visitor. "To the utmost of my power, Mr. Wendell, you may command me. I shall be very ready to give you whatever aid I can."

Philip Wendell seated himself, and, after a short pause, commenced unburthening his mind to the old man whom, but a few months back, he would have shrunk from recognizing as a fellow-worker with himself—much more as one to whom he could apply for help in time of need. It was a long story—all the doubts, difficulties, and vacillations that had beset him for the last six months. Nothing was hidden, though when he laid his inmost soul bare he half expected Mr. Thynne would shrink from him almost with the same horror that he would formerly have felt himself for one who had so lapsed into the utter darkness of unbelief. But the minister heard him to the end with the same gentle patience that always characterised him; and when he had finished, looked earnestly in his face, with

"And you have told me all?"

"All," was the reply, "and a woeful telling it is. Can you help me? Can you throw any light upon the darkness of my way? I don't ask you, as one who has been a Churchman might speak to a Sectarian, if your way is better than mine; but I ask if there is *any* way out of all this labyrinth of doubt in which I find myself lost and bewildered? Is *all* that you and I have believed in common false? Was there ever a Christ, and how shall I find him? Is there a God, and how can I be brought to know him? I am afraid I shock you, and I cannot wonder at it. I should have once spurned from me as an unclean thing any one who would have put such questions; but I *must* find an answer to them if I am ever to know anything like peace again. Don't argue with me—I have gone over all the old arguments myself," he added with a mournful smile—"all the old reasonings that once I should have thought must infallibly have convinced another, but to little purpose. If I could only meet with a man who from the very depths of his heart could say,

‘I know,’ and ‘I believe,’ I feel that it would be like the hand upon the blind man’s eyes, and the voice that made them open.”

Ah ! Philip Wendell need have had little fear that the old man who had heard him would meet *his* case with arguments—they would have been worse than useless, going over the old ground that he had trodden himself so often. And what had the learning of the Schools, or the traditions of the Fathers, to do with a case like his ? He knew all these old remedies, and, as he said, had applied them himself and failed to obtain relief. No, it was the warm living voice that Philip Wendell needed, and the touch of the warm living hand ; and it was with these that the old minister, who had passed through his own dark hours, when the heavens were veiled from him, and the earth covered as with a pall, sought to bring comfort to the troubled soul that, throwing aside all pride of caste and position, had come to him in its bitter need, and asked for help.

They were hours together. It was past mid-

night before they thought of parting, and Philip Wendell arose at length cheered and strengthened. It was so much, so very much, to hear that one now standing on the firm sure ground of invincible, unquestioning belief, had had his own time of doubt and despondency.

“You will come out of this, my friend,” said the old man. “The Lord will stretch out his hand to save you from perishing in the waters, as he once did to me; and you will look back to this time as a sane man might to the days when madness possessed him, or a healthy one to those when he was fever-stricken. But how long it may be first is not for me to say; only one thing is very sure—you must be true to yourself meanwhile, and I do not see how, as an honest man, you can still continue to serve the Lord either before the altar or in the pulpit, uttering words to which your heart gives no response. It may be that there will never come a time when you will feel yourself fully justified in doing so. You may have the full peace and joy of believing the Gospel, but not

of believing all the teachings of your Church. You may be a good Christian yet—all the more Christlike, perhaps, for having passed through this time of fiery trial—it is quite possible you may never again be a zealous Churchman—or, although ready and glad to worship in your Church, and to join in the noblest *form* of worship that it was ever yet given to man to put together, you may not feel yourself free to offer it up with the full confidence in the fitness and truth of every word that he should have who utters it. Let that be as it may—it is a question for the future to settle. Your present duty is to put your hand to any other work it may find to do, but to relinquish your present vocation at once.”

It was the best course to pursue, as Philip had long felt—the only one consistent with his honour. They had a little further talk, and then, shyly and diffidently, the old minister said,

“You have spoken so frankly to me, Mr. Wendell, and taken my counsel in such good part, that I am emboldened to touch upon another subject,

and a more delicate one even than those we have been discussing. My dear friend Mrs. Marchdale has told me the real reason that induced you, at the cost of much suffering to yourself, to resign some hopes that must have been very precious to you. *Must* those hopes be altogether sacrificed? I do not think I am saying anything that would cause even Miss Thornleigh to accuse me of lowering her dignity, if I remind you that however you might act with regard to yourself, you had her happiness to think of. With your altered views, are you not entitled to reconsider your decision, and ask her not to suffer it to be irrevocable? Love is a very real and earnest thing—especially the love of such a one as Magdalene Thornleigh.”

There was a flutter of joy and hope thrilling through Philip Wendell's heart as he heard the old minister's words ; but he only said,

“ If I leave the Church—and I can do nothing else—what have I to offer my wife? I shall have to struggle for a maintenance as best I may. Dare I ask her to link her fate with one so un-

certain as mine ? To wait, and wait—and wait, perhaps, till her beauty has faded, and her youth gone, before I can offer her a home !”

“I think I would ask her. Let all be laid frankly before her. I have little doubt that she will choose the waiting, and be all the happier for having the choice offered her.”

As he walked home that night, Philip resolved to take the minister's counsel ; something told him that the old man was right, and that Magdalene would wait, ay, even though the waiting were for life ; but she was now away in London, and the first step it behoved him to take was to resign his curacy. Not another Sunday would he officiate—not once again would he offer up prayers as he had been doing lately, feeling that to him they were dull, unmeaning words. With the morning his earliest task would be to repair to the Rectory, and acquaint Mr. Darnell with the necessity he felt of immediately relinquishing his office.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. DARNELL was seated in his study, and his wife with him, when early the next day Philip Wendell entered it. The Rector was looking and feeling cross and irritable. The cook had spoiled his cutlets at breakfast, and given warning when reproved for doing so ; and the upper housemaid, whose irreproachable character and extremely correct appearance had induced Mrs. Darnell to consent to give her higher wages than she had ever paid before to any one in a similar situation, had been detected the previous evening flirting over the garden wall with one of Mr. Marchdale's grooms. The last family at the Manor House had kept but one man-servant, who officiated both as coachman and gardener ; and, besides being afflicted with the erysipelas, was

much too old for any purpose of sweethearting. But Mr. Marchdale's establishment was conducted on a very different scale from that of his predecessors in the Manor House, and his under-gardeners and grooms were, generally speaking, young and good-looking—just, as Mrs. Darnell said, as if it were done on purpose to annoy their neighbours. The Rectory might really almost as well be near a livery stable, as far as the maids were concerned.

Mrs. Darnell had been expatiating upon the manner in which cook had thought fit to resent being found fault with, and the breaches of discipline Mr. Marchdale's men-servants caused in her own household, when the Curate entered the study.

She left the room, wishing him good-morning as she did so ; and the Rector, looking up with a querulous, fretful expression, motioned Philip to a chair, and leaning back in his own, seemed to ask what fresh infliction fate and his subordinate had in store for him, and to hope for strength to bear it.

He was not long kept in suspense. Philip Wendell dashed into the subject that had brought him there, by announcing his intention of quitting the Church, on the ground of feeling an increasing unfitness for it, and requesting the Rector to allow him to resign at once an office which he felt he could no longer fill consistently with his own ideas of truth and justice.

Mr. Darnell had never been so surprised, and scarcely ever more annoyed, in his life. He had brought himself to regard Philip Wendell as a necessary infliction—a mitigated evil, which it behoved him to bear with, sooner than have the whole parish given over to dissent, or be himself called upon to stem the torrent of heresy and schism which might otherwise overflow it. If Mr. Wendell had had a living offered him, or his health had failed, he could have understood his resigning, and would have endeavoured to bear the loss of his services with due submission. But to have him desert his post simply on account of some vague undefined scruples of conscience,

which no man in his senses, having once signed the articles and entered the Church, had any business to entertain, seemed an absurd and unnecessary trial of his patience, and he had no hesitation in expressing himself to this effect. It was a new thing to him, he said, these over-niceties and refinements; in his day men, who were thought sound scholars, too, had never troubled themselves about such matters—they were content to believe as others had done before them, and to consider that what had been so long established as sound and wholesome doctrine, was not for them to question.

Was not Mr. Wendell rather rash in arriving at the conclusion that there was nothing for him but to throw up his profession? The Church did not require such full and implicit belief in every iota of her creeds—every tittle of her formulas. Let him, as an older, more experienced man, advise him to reconsider his decision.

But Philip was very firm. This was no new thing to him, he replied. He had considered and

reconsidered the question for months past; and felt that, as an honest man, but one course was open to him. He was sorry to inconvenience Mr. Darnell, but he could not—he dared not officiate another Sunday. Anything that he could do to make amends for throwing up his office so abruptly—any sacrifice of salary—and here Mr. Darnell waved his hand as if such mundane matters were not to be thought of in a case like this, and mournfully closed his eyes with a heavy sigh, feeling that his burden was hard to bear, and between his cook and his Curate his trials were too many for him.

So Philip Wendell left him, and hastened back to his apartments to complete his arrangements for leaving the village within a few days. There were the Clothing Club and the Reading Room still to be seen to, accounts connected with the different charities to be wound up, different poor pensioners to consign to the care of others, and many matters connected with the routine of his week-day life to be brought to something like a satisfactory conclusion before they were handed

over to his successor to be carried on afresh. Then he resolved, as soon as he could do so, to repair to Crome, acquaint his relatives with the change in his views, ascertain fully the best and the worst they would think of it, and then return and offer his hand, with what poor fortunes were remaining to him, to Magdalene.

He thought a great deal of himself just now—necessarily so, though not a selfish man—a very great deal of Magdalene, and something, too, of the many schemes of usefulness which he had begun, and must now leave to another to complete; but very little—Mrs. Darnell would have thought unfeelingly little—of the annoyance and vexation he had caused at the Rectory, or of the stir and scandal which his throwing up his office would cause throughout the village.

“The trouble and the worry Mr. Darnell will have in looking for another curate!”—so Mrs. Darnell moaned—“and to have a young man flying in the face of Providence, and throwing up his opportunities like this!”

And it was not very long before Philip's visit over-night to Mr. Thynne was known throughout the village; for even the minister's sedate little maid had the weaknesses of her sex, and could not resist an occasional bit of gossip, and this, joined to the fact that the Curate had for some time past been an occasional visitor at the Manor House, soon caused not only Mr. Darnell, but many others to shake their heads wisely, and to intimate that Mr. Wendell's defection from the Church was but another of the numerous sins which Mrs. Marchdale had to answer for. It was not many hours before the news reached that lady, and she, as might have been expected, rushed naturally to what, in her eyes, was the most important conclusion to be drawn from it—"that *now* there was no earthly reason why the Curate, since he was not going to be a Curate any longer, should not marry Magdalene, who, poor, silly, simple little thing, would be ready enough to take him, after all."

It was, as Mrs. Marchdale expressed herself,

"the best news she had heard for many a day. Philip Wendell was going to throw up his profession, and act like a sensible man in making sure of the most charming wife he could possibly have."

So good did Mrs. Marchdale think this news, that though the days were drawing in, she resolved to go herself—borrowing Clarice's ponyphaeton for the purpose—to fetch her husband from the station, directing a groom—the very one who had unintentionally brought Mr. Darnell's head housemaid into trouble—to go on horseback, leading their ponies for Rowland and Cliffe. It was a bright afternoon—very lovely, though it was now towards the middle of November. And what a still calm beauty of their own these autumn days possess! With a rest and a peacefulness about them that the spring, with its ever-changing life, and the gorgeous summer, with its heat and glare, never know. Catharine Marchdale thought so as her ponies whirled her through the pleasant lanes and quiet roads that led to the station. But she had the eye of an

artist, and there was not a tree in its changing foliage—not a picturesque cottage—not a painter's "bit" that she passed which she did not enjoy with the keen hearty zest of one to whom beauty in every shape was an ever new delight. And to her the red and yellow leaves that lay thickly upon the roadside, or that a gust of wind would send dancing before her ponies' feet like frolicsome children in play, had as great a charm as when, in the tender hues of May, or the rich, full greennesses of June, they hung upon the trees. She loved the slight mist in the air, the faint smell of the fallen foliage, the glimpses by fire-light of the cottage interiors, the wreathing smoke from cottage chimneys, and even the chilliness which suggested how pleasant on their return would be the bright fire in the cheerful dining-room, and the welcome of the light and warmth of home. She was so radiant with the pleasure of her drive, and the thought of the news she had to impart, when her husband came to the phaeton, that he remarked it.

"What have you to tell me, Kate?—something good, I am sure, by your eyes."

"Yes, something very good—there, pull the rug over you—something so good that I drove down myself, that you might have it sooner. Philip Wendell has come to his senses at last! He is going to leave the Church, and marry Magdalene!"

"Very good, you call it!" returned Mr. Marchdale, drily; "and, pray, madame, when the young man has left the Church, and taken unto himself a wife, what means will he have of supporting her?"

"Oh! that will be sure to come!" was the hopeful reply; "a man with Philip Wendell's brains will always find work for his hand to do; and, oh! Ste, don't you pity Mrs. Darnell?—she is so woefully bewailing the having to look for another Curate, who will never do anything like the work Mr. Wendell has done, nor carry out half the things he has begun; and the parish will all be going back, unless Mr. Darnell, who really has no

health to do it, sees to the schools and the clubs himself, which, at his time of life, will be quite enough to kill him."

"I fancy Mrs. Waybrooke has called at the Rectory, and afterwards dropped in for an afternoon cup of tea with you," said Mr. Marchdale.

"Yes—it was from Mrs. Waybrooke I heard it all; and you are quite right, sir, she *did* come to tea with me." Mrs. Waybrooke and Mrs. Marchdale were very good friends now, as neighbours should be. "Mr. Wendell only tendered his resignation this morning—forced it on Mr. Darnell, in fact, who really was quite overcome by it, after having brought himself to overlook Mr. Wendell's very peculiar ways and eccentricities, on account of his usefulness in the parish. He must have been reading the Essays and Reviews, or been corrupted by that dreadful Colenso, and talks about scruples and doubts, as if a curate had not plenty to do in minding his work, and preaching his sermons, without meddling with matters like those!"

"It strikes me, Kate," observed Mr. Marchdale,

gravely, "there is something more serious at the bottom of Mr. Wendell's throwing up his curacy than mere love for Magdalene Thornleigh!"

"More *serious*! and *mere* love!—and, pray, sir, what more serious motive than this mere love would you have? Well, be it so; and if love *pur et simple* is not at the root of the matter, and these scruples and doubts, which seem such needless impertinences to Mr. Darnell, have something to do with it, why, not the less, Philip Wendell will no longer be tormented with the idea that he is a priest, and nothing *but* a priest, and that natural affections are carnal vanities to be trodden under foot; he will return to Magdalene, and I have not the slightest doubt myself that all will end happily, and you and I before long shall have to give the wedding breakfast."

"Possibly," replied Mr. Marchdale; "but how will they get their breakfasts and dinners after that? That's Jephson, isn't it?" he asked abruptly.

Mrs. Marchdale looked in the direction her

husband indicated, and, in the dim twilight, saw Dr. Jephson driving rapidly past. The Doctor always drove splendid horses—they were needed in his rounds, and this one was going at full speed. It was not often Dr. Jephson drove so furiously.

“There’s life or death in question,” said Mr. Marchdale, “or the Doctor would never urge his horse like that.”

They were soon within the walls of the Manor House, and in the bright home atmosphere forgot the chilly evening drive, and the figure of the Doctor flying past to save, or, at least, to soothe some sufferer who needed him. Forgot it with the selfishness that clings to the best and tenderest of us—forgot, by their own bright fireside, with the merry words and laughter that made it so much the brighter, what helpless pain might be near them, what suffering wretch might be calling on God and man to keep off the dark hour, or to lessen the pangs of unutterable anguish. Forgot it for awhile, but it was not long before they were

to learn who had so urgently required the Doctor's skill, and in whose behalf his horse had been so recklessly driven.

CHAPTER XVI.

IT was all through Elmsley the next morning—not only did the Marchdales hear it, but every one in the village learnt the fresh news, which, coming so quickly upon the stir caused by Mr. Wendell's resignation of his office, caused an infinite amount of scandal and gossiping. But then, as Mrs. Darnell often said, there never had been anything but scandal and gossiping in the place since Mrs. Marchdale came to it. Things never went quietly now as they had formerly done; and if Mrs. Marchdale had not caused Mrs. John Thornleigh to slip downstairs and fall headforemost so violently that her life was despaired of, why, if it had not been for Mrs. Marchdale, the unhappy creature would never have been in the place at all to have fallen.

So it was this accident—an accident which was really but a very natural sequence to Mrs. John Thornleigh's course of life—that had brought Dr. Jephson away from his dinner, to see what help he could render to the mistress of the house in the tile-yard, who lay prone and helpless on the bed where, not a twelvemonth since, the husband she had deceived and deserted had died without forgiving her. No one could affirm for a certainty, but it was easy to imagine the condition Mrs. Thornleigh must have been in when the fall took place. The scared and terrified maids, whom the suddenness of the disaster had almost driven into a state of semi-idiotcy, could tell nothing when questioned, but that missis had been sitting, as usual, in the parlour after dinner, taking a glass, as she generally did; and having gone to her bed-room, and finding some cause for displeasure in the state in which it had been left, had called hastily for the girl whose work it was to attend to the chamber; and not being answered at once, had gone, they supposed, in quest of her, and missing her footing

on the stairs, had slipped down. One of the maids had just enough wit left to dispatch a "follower," who had dropped in to dinner, for Dr. Jephson, and that gentleman afterwards declared that a scene of more disorderly confusion, and utter incapability of any one around to render assistance to the sufferer, he never beheld. He promptly despatched a messenger for Miss Becky, and on her arrival informed her that unless she consented to take the charge of matters in her own hands, her sister-in-law's recovery would be out of the question, and in any case it was doubtful enough.

Miss Becky was generally ready to undertake anything in the shape of duty, and the duty of setting Mrs. John Thornleigh's disorderly household to rights, and giving the untidy girls who composed it to understand that "they had some one to look after them at last," was something that exactly suited her. She took up her post in Mrs. John's bed-room, making frequent excursions from it, to see how things were going on downstairs; and did her best to carry out Dr. Jephson's

directions, as far as concerned the helpless creature thrown thus unexpectedly upon her care. But there was little to do. Hour after hour Mrs. John Thornleigh continued in the same state of stupor as when first Dr. Jephson had been sent for.

"It's the fall," said Miss Becky. "How strange! Just like my poor brother! One's no business to be uncharitable, Dr. Jephson, but it seems to me very like a judgment on her."

But Dr. Jephson knew that there was a cause for Mrs. Thornleigh's stupor which there had not been for her husband's, and gradually, as the fumes of the brandy of which she had partaken wore away, the unhappy creature recovered from her stupor—not to consciousness, but to a ghastly, hideous mockery of life, shocking Miss Becky's ears by the shrieks, and cries, and revelations of her past life, which she poured forth; and making even the good doctor, who had stood by many a terrible sick bed, think that in all his life he had never seen one so terrible as this.

But Miss Becky kept to her post. She had

come there, she said, to nurse her brother's wife, and she was going to do it. The creature was a good-for-nothing, of course, and it was a great pity she had ever led poor John astray, and caused him to make a fool of himself; still, as he had thought fit to marry her, it wasn't right and proper that she should die as if she had nobody belonging to her, and those two impudent sluts carrying on their games all the time. Only one thing Miss Becky insisted on; not till the worst—if worst in such a case it could be called—was close at hand should Magdalene be sent for. The woman was her mother, certainly, but she was no fit person for an innocent girl to be brought in contact with; and in this opinion of Miss Becky's, Mrs. Marchdale, who came daily to see how matters were going on at the house in the tile-yard, fully agreed. But, although Magdalene was excluded from her mother's sick room, and not even yet acquainted with her danger, Rowland Marchdale was a frequent visitor there. At first Mrs. Marchdale had hesitated about allowing him

to come, but in Martha's milder moods she was almost incessant in her demands for him, mixing up the names of Roley and Charley together, till it seemed as if, in her darkened mind, she could hardly distinguish them; and there were such pitiful wailings for the child poured from the wretched creature's lips, that it would have required a sterner heart than Roley's mother possessed to have kept him from her; and when Roley, half frightened, and shrinking, as boys and men do, from the sight of illness and physical suffering, made his appearance in Martha's room, she addressed him as "Charley, little Charley," and for a time the dark moods seemed to leave her. Not for long, though; other and darker memories than those of Charley's innocent short life seemed to be brought back by the sight of Roley's rounded face, and they had to send the boy from the room, lest he should hear the curses and the disclosures of the sin-stained past that the wretched woman poured forth.

So things went on for some days, and Dr.

Jephson gave no hope of any recovery—it was but a question of a little time more or less; and who, it might be thought, could wish it otherwise?—who for one moment could regret that a life like Martha Thornleigh's was so soon to be brought to a close?

Philip Wendell did, however. He had thought to have gone to Magdalene while the cloud of her mother's shameful life was still resting on her, and to ask her if she would now forgive him the wrong which the thought of that had once impelled him to commit. But Magdalene, with her wretched mother no longer living to be a standing reproach and shame to her—and moreover Magdalene, the heiress to all her father's savings, would be in a very different position to the penniless girl whom he had thought to ask to link her poor fortunes with his own broken ones; and to let him, if he had no wealth to offer, at least share whatever stain might rest upon her.

He was nervously sensitive and scrupulous on such points; and not even to possess himself again

of Magdalene—precious as he still held her—could he have stooped to play the part of fortune-hunter. To a man like Philip Wendell, it would have been hard enough to have had a wealthy wife; but to seem to woo her for her wealth—her, too, whom in other circumstances he had once put from him, would have been intolerable. He resolved to leave Elmsley without a sign or word to Magdalene—to wind up matters connected with his office as speedily as possible, and then hasten down to Crome, and tell the Squire and the Parson that he was a heretic and an outcast.

But he could not go without taking leave of some of those with whom he had been best acquainted during his stay in Elmsley; and he set apart a portion of the last day before his departure from the village for this purpose; and after going to the Rectory to say good-bye to Mrs. Darnell and her daughters, he turned his steps towards the Limes, and found Mrs. Waybrooke at home, and engaged in her favourite occupation of writing to one of her daughters.

“Good morning, Mr. Wendell,” she said, shaking hands with him. “I was just telling Sophie—Mrs. Charles Halliday, you know—that you are going to leave us. I don’t know how we shall possibly get on without you. You haven’t half done your work in this place yet. But there is one thing—you can resume it in another character. You will make a very useful country gentleman—there is nothing *now* to prevent Miss Magdalene Thornleigh and you settling matters again. It will be so nice to have you amongst us, especially as Captain Osborne, though the kindest creature in the world, will *not* be persuaded to do his duty properly.”

“You are scarcely likely to see me here again, either as a country gentleman or in any other character. My farewell to Elmsley will most likely be for life.”

“I hope not, Mr. Wendell,” said Mrs. Waybrooke warmly. “There is no one in all the world to whom I am so much indebted as to you. Captain Osborne has been very good—I can never

thank him enough—but you were the real saviour of my poor boy. Don't let me think I shall never see you again—take an old woman's advice, and give Magdalene Thornleigh the chance of saying 'yes' once more."

Philip Wendell shook his head.

"We won't talk of this, Mrs. Waybrooke. I came here to say good-bye, and to recommend one or two of my poor pensioners to your charge."

Then he told her who they were, and their different needs and requirements; and Mrs. Waybrooke promised her good offices in their behalf. And then, though he had said he would talk of Magdalene no more, he led the conversation himself to Magdalene's mother, and asked her if she had heard how Mrs. Thornleigh was?

"Still the same—it's a woeful death-bed by all accounts—and Miss Becky must have a sad time of it. There's one thing; she will be supported by the consciousness that she is doing her duty—and no doubt she is; but I should not envy Mrs. Thornleigh her nurse if she were conscious who

fills the office. What a pity it is, Mr. Wendell, good people are so often disagreeable! Is good breeding one of the small sins, that we so often find people whose *specialité* it is to be good Christians, so carefully eschewing it? If you were still in the pulpit, I'd ask you to give us a sermon about it. Ah! how strange it is that both you and my boy should give up the career marked out for you! Well, perhaps if Artie had gone into the Church he might have had his doubts too, so things are better as they are. But for you, Mr. Wendell, this change in your ideas may be a very good one for you in other ways. Now, don't be angry—one can't be expected to feel sorry for a woman of Mrs. Thornleigh's stamp; and as this accident was to happen, it really seems very fortunate that it should take place just after you had changed your views. Now, do look at the matter in a rational light, and be persuaded to make yourself happy—and somebody else, too."

Philip went away vexed and angry. Why should Mrs. Waybrooke think it an easy thing

for him to go down on his knees, and ask Magdalene to overlook the past, and give him herself and her wealth? He proceeded to Mrs. Marchdale, who had learned, since she had first heard of his defection from the Church, to sympathize with, and feel for him more seriously than she had at first done. There was something to be thought of besides wooing and wedding, when such a man as Philip Wendell left a cause in which he had laboured so earnestly, and a profession to which he had devoted himself heart and soul. And something of this manifested itself in her manner, and beamed from her dark eyes as they turned with an almost pitying kindness upon Philip, when he entered her little sanctum. She had heard a great deal of him from Mr. Thynne, and she was not one to be too much shocked and startled by an unbelief which, she thought with the old minister, was not likely to be a permanent state of mind; and she could fully appreciate the thorough-going hearty honesty which had caused him to throw up his post when he felt that he

could not justly fill it. It was a relief to Philip, coming from Mrs. Waybrooke's good-natured worldliness, to sit down and talk with Mrs. Marchdale on his future prospects, or, rather, utter want of them, and to tell her of some poor old creatures to be good to, when he could no longer help them; but she vexed him too, when after telling him how thoroughly she approved the step he had taken, and how, consistently with honour and self-respect, she did not see that he could have acted otherwise, she spoke of the probability of his returning to them again, if only to take Magdalene away. Every one—even Mrs. Marchdale, from whom he had looked for better things—seemed so ready to think him eager to avail himself of the chance of winning a wealthy wife, and taking from her all that he should have given.

He went away, still chafed and irritable, to pay his remaining visits, and the next morning saw him on the way to Crome.

It was more than a twelvemonth since he had

been there ; the occasion of his last visit was a very different errand—to tell his relatives of an approaching change in his condition certainly, but a change of quite another kind to that which was now before him. And he had gone, too, feeling very sure of their approval of the step he contemplated taking ; now he went, feeling equally certain that what he had to communicate might prove an insuperable barrier between himself and them. He was the first Wendell who had been false to the traditions of his house. As he once said to Mrs. Marchdale, “We Wendells have been always gentlemen ;” and gentlemen of the old Tory school—essentially English in their faults and virtues, their pluck, their obstinacy, and perhaps their narrow-mindedness ; they had always been gentlemen, above all, in the qualities which now, in his time of trouble, Philip pre-eminently displayed ; their unflinching honour and straightforwardness—their uncompromising adherence to whatever they esteemed best and fittest—the Wendells had always been. But not

a Wendell, till now, had ever been a tradesman, a radical, or a Dissenter. The Squireship and the Hall for the head of the family, the Living and the Vicarage for the next in succession, and the Law, the Sea, and the Army for the junior branches; so it had been generation after generation, and now here was he turning his back upon the paths his fathers had trodden in, and contemning the faith which they had esteemed sound doctrine by which to live, and in which to die.

It was no pleasant thing for a man to be travelling on Philip Wendell's errand; he leaned moodily back in the carriage, wishing his tale told, and himself far away from the old familiar places, which he was now about to look upon for the last time. They had been very kind to him, those two old men, each in his own way—the Squire liberal with money, as if to his own son; giving it, too, with a free kindly heartiness that enhanced the value of the gift. Very ready, too, to condone boyish failings, and to make all allowances for boyish outbreaks and misde-

meanours. As long as a lad was truthful and honest, the Squire would have forgiven him a good deal ; and certainly in these respects Philip had never given him reason to complain of shortcomings. And the Parson had always been very good, too ; in a different way, perhaps, from the Squire's, for the two brothers were not constituted alike. Philip remembered the long talks he had had with the Vicar over their favourite books, the pleasant strolls together down the Somerset lanes, with the apple-trees hanging over the hedges, and the ripe fruit dropping at their feet, and the village children waylaying them ; knowing, as they did, that " Parson " kept an inexhaustible stock of "sweeties" in his coat pocket. Ah ! and he remembered, too, the little loving reproofs of long ago, when, as a boy, his wayward temper had broken out, or he had indulged in fits of sullenness. You see, he had never been very good, after all, this poor Philip—fashioned of imperfect clay, but yet of such clay as Nature sets apart to mould her heroes and her martyrs from.

He had written, but very briefly, to the Vicar to tell him he was coming down; had simply said that he had resigned his curacy, and should not seek another; intending to relinquish his profession. As the train whirled him on, he could picture the old man reading this letter; he felt that he had made it unnecessarily cold and curt. He had said to himself that he would ask no pity, no indulgence from his kindred; but might he not have felt that they had a claim to some from him?

And other visions came before him as he thought of the Vicar reading the letter by the study fire; how pleasantly and kindly, when he had heard of his nephew's promised bride, he had spoken of the bright young wife who would brighten up the walls of the Vicarage when he, its present inmate, should have passed away; how he had pointed out different rooms to be brought into use when a family came to require them; planned where the very nursery should be, and said how glad he felt at the thought that the old

place was at last likely to have children's voices in it.

"For it has been quiet—much too quiet in my time, Phil. No young ones but you and your brother now and then in the holidays. Ah! God knew best when He took wife and child together. May it please Him, my boy, to make up to you for all He has thought fit to withhold from me!"

It was not often the Vicar alluded to the one trouble of his life. He looked and was a cheery, easy-tempered man—perhaps a little too jovial for a parson—I am certain both Mrs. Darnell and Miss Becky would have said so. He could make his joke and take it; never forgot that if he was Vicar of Crome he was also a Wendell and a country gentleman; and although he had one predominant taste of a more clerical nature than field sports, and which kept him from indulging as much as he might otherwise have done in them, he still fished, and in his time had both shot and hunted. It was not a man like this whom one would have

expected to cherish a life-long, abiding grief ; but so it was, and Philip, who had never before heard his uncle allude to the blow that had fallen on him while his nephew was yet unborn, now understood how it was that so many a bright Somersetshire belle had smiled in vain upon the Vicar, who in his heart held no living woman fit to take the place of the dear wife in her grave.

And he thought, too, of the fresh sorrow he had brought upon the speaker of those words, and questioned whether he had done well to speak the truth out so fully ; whether it would not have been more merciful to have temporised, as so many others had done ; whether he had not been unduly rash and outspoken, and whether he had sufficiently considered how much of the soundest wisdom there was in the apostolic injunction, "If it be possible, live in peace with all men."

But it had not been possible ; he felt that. What peace could there be for a man whose very life was a lie, who took undeserved wages and ate bread compared to which that of a thief would be hon-

estly earned ? No, peace had *not* been possible for him, and after all a man might lose more precious things than peace.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE Vicar of Crome sat alone in his study on the dull November morning on which Philip was being whirled by the train towards him, reading the letter from his nephew which the post had brought. As Philip himself was now feeling, this letter had been needlessly cold and hard. It told the worst, and told it sternly and almost roughly. He might have thought a little less of his own pride and independence, and a little more of the kindly old man to whom he dealt this blow ; he need not have been so ready to say, when he despatched this letter, that if his relations chose to fling him off, they should never say he had sued to them for pity.

The Vicar read the letter again and again, and then, with a sigh, put it in his waistcoat pocket,

and saying, "I must take it to brother George," went to the study window and looked out at the weather. It was a dreary day, chilly, damp, and miserable; one of those days when the cold seems to strike to the very bones, and we feel dull and wretched, as if body and soul were alike numbed and chilled by the depressing influence of the weather. The leaves lay thick upon the garden walks near the shrubberies, and the late autumn flowers hung their heads and looked draggled and untidy, and all that had made the beauty of the summer, now only contributed additional elements of ugliness and disorder. It was a woeful contrast to the bright days of the early autumn, when Philip Wendell had come to his relatives to tell them of his promised bride, and to ask their approval of his marriage. The Vicar thought of it, and gave another sigh, and, turning from the window, warmed his hands over the wood fire.

The breakfast-things were in the study, for it was the Vicar's favourite room. His books were very precious things to him. He had gone to them

as a resource and comfort in a time of great trouble, and they had been dear friends to him ever since. There was scarcely one whose history he could not have told—the time when he bought it, the state in which it was, where, if fresh binding was required, he had had it done, the name of the author, when and where he lived, and what other books he had written. The Vicar's books were treasures of choice binding—those, at least, that he had thought fit to have bound since he had purchased them. Calf and morocco, and dainty letterings. The old gentleman took as much pride in decorating his books as a lover would in adorning his mistress. But there were some amongst them much worn and shabby, that were the greatest treasures of all—bindings two hundred years old, with which it would have been a sin for any modern hand to meddle. These had been purchased—some at book-auctions, some at old book-stalls—when the Vicar had visited Exeter, or on the rare occasions when he had sojourned in London.

This fancy of the Vicar's had kept him, considering what was the annual value of the living of Crome, a poor man; still, he had always felt himself justified in indulging in it, seeing that he had none to save for; and that upon his brother, the Squire—being unmarried, and the head of the family—it had devolved, as of right, to provide for the nephews, the eldest of whom was to be his heir.

The poor of the Vicar's parish had no right to complain of any stint to them on account of his lavishness on his books; if he erred at all with regard to them, it was on the side of over-liberality; and his household expenses, though moderate, were still sufficient for quiet, unpretending comfort. But his expenditure on his library was to be estimated not by tens, but by hundreds—the Vicar of Crome was known to every bibliopole who had a rare copy to dispose of, or a choice edition to offer.

The Vicar led a peaceful life, and, on the whole, a happy one. One great grief more than thirty years ago had swept over him, when the wife of a

year, and the child of a day, were taken almost in the same instant from him. Since then his path had been a quiet one—if brightened by no great joys, at least undisturbed by any of the cares and troubles that might have been his lot had sons and daughters gathered round him. The Squire and he had been true brothers always, agreeing the better perhaps because in many respects they were unlike. Both true Wendels—large, fine men, with the dark eyes and hair, and massive features of the race; but while the Squire at sixty-eight carried himself as erect as ever, the Vicar, his junior by three years, had a slight stoop, and though he knew how to make himself respected, and, if need be, feared, his manner had none of the imperiousness which marked the Squire's, who, as the country folks said, had, like all the Wendells, a will and a way of his own, and took care to let people know it. When the Squire would carry things with a high hand, the Vicar would, if possible, conciliate; the Squire was apt to be hasty and impatient, and to express himself very

often with but little regard for the feelings of others, or consideration as to what was required of him by the ordinary rules of courtesy. He was a king in a small way, a thorough despot, though a kindly one, generous, imperious, wilful, and overbearing. The Vicar, though very simple in his manners, had much of that old world politeness which is fast passing from us—a politeness which belonged to the time of queues and powder. He was almost reverential to women—possibly because, having loved one so well, he had learned to honour all others for her sake; and he was very good to children, and there was not a child in the village who did not know it, and turn the knowledge to good account too, by taking care to put itself in parson's way whenever he went out, knowing well the treasures not only of sweeties, but small dolls, tops and balls, which were sure to come out of those immense coat-pockets, to the girls who had done their sewing neatly, or the boys who had answered well in class. Sometimes the Squire found fault with his brother for being too

easily imposed upon by the more artful of his parishioners; and a village is not the place in which to look for Arcadian simplicity. Sometimes the Squire was reproved in his turn for dealing too harshly with the labourers on the farm, or perhaps swearing too roundly at an offender; but these were the lightest summer clouds, not to be counted as drawbacks to the life-long unison that had subsisted between the Squire and the Vicar of Crome.

The villagers were partial to their parson, but I think, on the whole, they liked the Squire fully as well. It is true they found him a sterner man to deal with than his brother—quicker tempered, and much more despotic; but all this a Squire might fitly be, and I think the villagers considered it rather a crowning grace in their estimate of Mr. Wendell's virtues, that he had been known to knock a man down for answering him impertinently, and in youth had fought a duel on account of the fair lady who afterwards jilted him, and for whose sake—so it was said—he had remained a bachelor.

The Vicar was very lenient in his judgment of his brother. The Wendells were not an easy-tempered race, and should be judged, he thought, with some allowance for the hereditary, inborn failing. If he himself had fortunately been born with a slighter tendency to it than was common to those of the Wendell race, it was not for him to censure those less fortunately constituted; but the knowledge that the Squire, in his imperious will and hasty moods, was every inch a son of the old stock, and Philip equally so in the undeviating firmness with which he would hold fast to whatever was right in his own eyes, sorely troubled the Vicar now.

For awhile he stood irresolutely over the fire, and then, mustering up his strength for the encounter, buttoned his coat, and taking up his gloves and walking-stick, proceeded to the Hall, for the first time in his life hating the errand which took him there.

It was an old place, the Hall, dating back to the reign of Elizabeth; not inconveniently large—

for the rental which was to support it never, when corn and rent were at their highest, exceeded four thousand a year—but a pleasant, picturesque dwelling for an English gentleman and his household, with all the points and quaintnesses of the time in which it was erected still about it. The Wendells had never been much given to improvements and alterations; fortunately for the appearance of their dwelling, whose red-brick exterior, bay windows, wainscoted rooms, and carved decorations, looked almost as they had done when Hugh Wendell, after making his fortune beyond seas, had returned to England with gold and gear, and built himself a fair home, and took to himself a fairer wife, to bear him children to live in that home after him, and hand his name down to succeeding generations.

Something of this crossed the Vicar's mind as he looked upon the house he had been born in, and thought of the letter he had received from Philip—from Philip, whose children, he had thought, would, in all likelihood, succeed to the

old place, when the Squire and he were gathered to their fathers. For although Philip was the younger brother, it had, for some years past, been to him that the old men had both looked as the one who was to hand down the family name, and whose sons would, in all likelihood, be, in their turn, the Squire and Vicar of Crome. For Philip's elder brother, Raymond Wendell, had never found his way to the hearts of his uncles as Philip had done. He had been from a boy what the Squire pronounced a sad dandy, and dandyism was not a foible for which the Squire could make much allowance. Neither had he married in a way that pleased the old gentleman. The lady had, it was true, both rank and money, but she was sickly, nervous, and fanciful, and little likely to give heirs to the old home. Then, too, being ordered by her physicians to reside in Italy during the winters, she and her husband found living on the Continent altogether more consonant to their inclinations than spending the summer months in England; and thus it happened that year after year

went by, and the Squire and Parson saw nothing of their elder nephew, and though they never spoke of him, even to each other, unkindly, both knew that on Philip their chief hopes rested, and that it was to him, and the children that were to be born to him, they looked to perpetuate their name and race.

The Vicar thought of all this, and for the first time in his life wished that the custom had never been established of making him the principal party in the family correspondence. The Squire hated letter-writing, and, if letters were over-long, was not too fond of reading them ; and so it had come to pass that Philip and his brother had fallen into the habit of directing their letters to the Vicar—it being understood that they were for the Squire's perusal as well as his—and expecting him to reply for both.

Never till now had the Vicar regretted this arrangement, for Philip's letters had hitherto been such welcome ones, that the replying to them, giving in full detail all the village news, the state of

the crops, the birth of a new foal in the Squire's stables, the purchase of a new book by himself, had always been considered by him as one of his pleasantest tasks. The Vicar remembered, too, how pleased he had been with what another in his place might have resented as presumptuous interference and undue fault-finding on the part of a younger man, but which he had regarded as the manifestations of a young zealous spirit, whose over-warmth and ardour were faults on the right side, which the coming years would tame down and cool.

"These things were so when I began my work, Philip," he had said; "and I have let them suffice for me; but men think differently now, and when Crome comes into your hands, you must make up for all my shortcomings. It is too late for me to change. You will come fresh and young to the work, and perform it to better purpose than I have done."

And he had often pictured to himself the improvements Philip would make in the schools, and

the good that he, with his prompt decision and clear-sightedness, would work among the villagers. He, the Vicar, had been too easy with them ; he felt it now—had not been sufficiently ready to speak a word in season if that word was a harsh one ; and perhaps had spent more hours in his study than as a parish priest whose congregation needed but little from him in the way of pulpit eloquence, he had a right to do. Philip was to make up for it all—Philip and Philip's wife—and now Philip had turned from the Church of his fathers, and the Vicarage and the living would pass to strangers—and this was to be the end of the Vicar's day-dreams !

He found the Squire in the stables, rating the grooms for some neglect of duty. He stopped short when he saw the Vicar.

“ Ah ! brother Ned, a bad morning for you to be out—look you, sir,” turning to the unlucky groom ; “ if it isn't the d——est nonsense—I beg your pardon, Ned—it's ill-manners swearing before a parson. We'll go into the house—and,”

addressing the groom again, "just work away at Firefly's coat another hour—don't let me see her looking again as if she came from drawing a plough. That mare's the prettiest thing in the stable, Ned—the fellow deserves a horsewhipping for neglecting her. I had her broken in for Phil's wife—before he thought fit to break with his sweetheart—I hope the young rascal will know his own mind next time. We'll turn into the study."

The Squire's study was a very different one to the Vicar's—the bookshelves were mostly lined with works on agriculture or farriery, and the account-books of the estate. There was an excellent collection of whips and fishing-rods around the walls, and a couple of fowling-pieces over the mantel-piece, and curious old arms from abroad of different dates, most of them family relics. It was easy to see that no lover of books possessed this sanctum, notwithstanding the name it bore.

"Phil has broken with more than his sweetheart," said the Vicar, producing Philip's letter.

•

"Marrying is not the only thing about which he does not seem to know his own mind. Look at it, George. I can hardly tell what it means beyond this—he will never be Vicar of Crome."

The Squire read the letter hastily, then flung it on the table.

"D——n the fellow! what does he mean by it, brother Ned?"

The Vicar shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head.

"Nothing more, I suppose, George, than that the Church, which has been good enough for you and me, and for all the Wendells before us, is not good enough for him. The boy's a fool—and yet it's hard, too, to think that of Phil!"

"And he's coming down to tell us more about it!" sneered the Squire, taking up the letter again. "All the reasons, forsooth, that have made him change his mind, and find out that all who have gone before him are dolts and asses!"

"Well, we'll wait and hear what he has to say for himself," said the Vicar.

"What he has to say!" cried the Squire, indignantly—"what *can* he have to say in excuse for throwing up his profession like this, and the family living too—a living that has never been held by any but a Wendell since they settled in these parts. He'll have a deal to say for himself I can tell you, Ned, before he can say anything that will serve as an excuse for him in my eyes."

The Squire flung the letter again on the table, and stood gloomily looking at it, with his hands behind his coat tails, and his back to the fire, in the attitude Englishmen are so partial to.

"I think," said the Vicar, "if it makes no difference to you, brother George, Phil had better come to me this time."

"I think he had," replied the Squire, "and you can bring him round with you to-morrow to tell us his reasons for making such a fool of himself, if he'll condescend to take the trouble."

"Things may not be quite so bad as we think for," said the Vicar, mildly. "After all, throw-

ing up the Curacy of Elmsley is not relinquishing the Church altogether. The boy has been infected with some of the idle nonsense of which young folks' heads are so full now-a-days. We must try and reason him out of it."

But in his heart the Vicar felt that the "boy" of whom he spoke was not one upon whom reasonings were likely to be of much avail, and the Squire replied, morosely—

"Reason, indeed! Master Phil is not one to listen to any reasonings but his own, and I don't think, Ned, you'll find him easily brought over by any arguments that you can use. You may rely upon it, the reasons will be all on one side. What business have old fools, like you and me, to know anything? Well, bring him over to luncheon to-morrow—bring him over, and let's hear what Master Phil has determined on in his wisdom."

The Vicar walked home, and the old women who met him saw that there was something amiss with "Parson," for he gave such an absent

“good day” to their curtsies, instead of the kindly salute and the friendly chat, that often included in its inquiries the cow or pig of which the dame he addressed might be the possessor. Even the children saw there was something wrong, for there was no pat of the head—no question as to how they stood in class, and more than all, no “sweeties” from the coat pocket. He ordered dinner to be an hour later than usual, directed a bed-room to be prepared for Mr. Philip, and the pony phaeton to be taken to the West-drop station, five miles off, to meet the six o'clock train from London. Then he went into his study again, and looked wistfully at his books—those books which he had thought would remain treasured inmates of the Vicarage long after he had passed away. What would become of them now? Would Phil, if he turned lawyer or soldier, care to possess them?—possibly, in the former case; but even then they would have to be banished from the walls of the old Vicarage, and be moved about, heaven alone knew where—

perhaps again and again—perhaps be rubbed, roughly handled—even mutilated or torn ; and if Phil had only settled down at Crome, they might have remained safely where they were for at least another generation. He mourned over his books as if they were sentient things. He could hardly have loved them more if they had been ; and then, luckily for him, the Vicar remembered that it was his day for visiting two or three of his parishioners who were bed-ridden, and so he did in his trouble the best thing any of us can do in ours—the duty which lay nearest to him ; and taking with him, not tracts—his faith in them was not too great—but a little tea for one old creature, and a little snuff, if the truth must be told, for another, set out on his walk again.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



